



McSutton







A
PRACTICAL EXPOSITION

OF THE
GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN,

IN THE FORM OF
LECTURES,

INTENDED TO ASSIST THE PRACTICE OF DOMESTIC
INSTRUCTION AND DEVOTION.

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EXPOSITORY LECTURES.

LECTURE LI.

JESUS DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS THE DOOR OF THE SHEEPFOLD.

JOHN x. 1—10.

1. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*

2. *But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

3. *To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.*

4. *And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.*

5. *And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.*

The last chapter described the manner in which the Pharisees treated the blind man, when they cast him out of the synagogue because he took the part of Jesus, who had given him sight. Yet the Pharisees were leaders of the people,—their instructors: they professed to guide and feed the sheep: whom they would they admitted, and whom they would they excluded from the fold. This may have led to the parable which we are now to consider. The Lord speaks of the people as of sheep that are folded. And he speaks of the fold, as having a door of entrance. And he describes himself as that door, through which whoever has a real claim to lead or guide the sheep must enter in. *He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.*

John the Baptist, for instance, had entered by the appointed door. He had directed the people to Jesus, as possessed of power which he himself had not, as entitled to honour which he could not claim: as the predicted "Lamb of God, who should take away the sin of the world." The Pharisees, on the contrary, used all their authority to disparage Jesus. They refused his testimony, denied his miracles, contradicted his doctrine, and agreed that if any should confess that he was the Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.

Hence he lays down a rule by which the *shepherd of the sheep* may be at all times known. *He*

that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep: he that, like St. Paul, “desires to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;” as the only “name under heaven given among men, whereby we may be saved.” This is *to enter in by the door*. And to such *the porter openeth*. Their way is prepared by the Spirit of God, who disposes many hearts to listen to their teaching: *the sheep hear the voice* of such a shepherd, and are led by him: he *goeth before them* in the way that they should choose, and they *follow him*:—they are followers of him, as he is of Christ: they *know his voice*, for it is that to which they are accustomed: but *they know not the voice of strangers*, who use another tone, or speak a different language.

Such is the agreeable contemplation presented to us by the parable. It is an interesting sight to observe a flock of sheep going quietly on their way: not driven by violence, or harassed by noise; but slowly moving onwards, with their shepherd before them, carrying perhaps a lamb in his bosom, or gently leading those that are with young. From time to time they linger awhile, and graze by the way side: but still he is leading them forward, and they are making progress towards the spot where he intends them to remain. And this sight, pleasing in itself, becomes still more so when it is compared with the minister of the gospel, to whom is committed the charge of Christ's sheep in this sinful world. *He calleth his*

own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. Are any missing? any needing his peculiar care? He answers the prophet's description, (Ezek. xxxiv. 16.) and "seeks that which was lost, and brings again that which was driven away, and binds up that which was broken, and strengthens that which was sick." And *when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them.* He directs and leads, but does not drive them: he goes before them in whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report: "by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God."¹ And thus he conducts them "through the wilderness like a flock," proceeding onwards to a safe retreat, to a never-failing pasture, to an undisturbed fold; into which the "chief shepherd" is already entered, and is watching to preserve his sheep, now scattered in this world of trial, and waiting to receive them into a world of safety and of joy. There they shall "neither hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor the sun smite them."² For through all eternity "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters:" and the shepherd and the sheep shall rejoice together.

6. *This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.*

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 6.

² Is. xlix. 10.

7. *Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.*

8. *All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.*

9. *I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.*

10. *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

Here our Lord represents himself still more clearly as *the door of the sheep*: the only entrance, by which either the sheep or the shepherds can enter into the heavenly fold. All who were used to claim authority, and exercise it over the people, *were thieves and robbers*: came for their own benefit, not for the sheep's sake: came *to steal, and to kill, and to destroy*: to counteract, not to serve, the great purposes of divine mercy, which desired *that they might have life*. These, if they could, would prevent this: they neither enter in themselves, nor suffer others to enter in. To such the true flock will not listen; they have none of the qualities which entitle them to be heard.

But Christ is the door, both to the shepherds and to the sheep. By him both “have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” By him *if any man enter in, he shall go in and out, and find pasture*. He shall have freedom and comfort: freedom of

soul, and grace to supply every need. And such is the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free, and such the abundant blessings which they enjoy, whilst they continue within his fold. Whether they are the shepherds, to whom the charge of the flock is intrusted, or whether they are the flock under their earthly shepherd's care, they *go in and out, and find pasture*: they are in a state of safety, delivered from spiritual want and harm. The Lord, "the great Shepherd of the sheep," has them under his charge: they shall not be destitute. "He maketh them to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth them beside the still waters. He restoreth their soul: he leadeth them in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow them all the days of their life; and they shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."³

LECTURE LII.

CHRIST DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

JOHN X. 11—18.

11. *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

³ Ps. xxiii. 2, 3, 6.

12. *But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth : and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.*

13. *The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.*

14. *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.*

15. *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father : and I lay down my life for the sheep.*

16. *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold : them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice : and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.*

17. *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.*

18. *No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*

In his former words, our Lord had described himself as the door of the sheepfold : the door by which the shepherds must find admission to the flock, the entrance by which both shepherds and their flocks must seek access to the Father.

This leads him to another comparison. He is not only the door of the fold, but he is also the guardian of those within the fold : he fulfils the prophetic promise ; he “ feeds his flock like a shepherd.” Others indeed pretended to be shepherds : there was no want of those who took upon themselves to lead and superintend the people.

But they were shepherds, as Isaiah had said, "that could not understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter."¹ They were those of whom God had said, "Woe to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed their flocks?"² He was *the good shepherd*. And there was a proof of it. He would *give his life for the sheep*. Not as *the hireling whose own the sheep are not*, and who would neither risk any thing for their safety, nor sacrifice any thing for their good: who *seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth*. Very different was the case of him who purchased the flock with his own blood: and who could say, *I lay down my life for the sheep: I know my sheep, and am known of mine*.

These two sentences well deserve remark: *I know my sheep; and am known of mine*.

When we look out into the world in a moral view, it appears a scene of confusion. And it is a comfort to those who have hearkened to the words of God, speaking to them in the gospel, that they have this assurance; "the Lord knoweth them that are his." Perhaps they are little known by men, and still less understood: but whether they are approved and admired, or misrepresented and scorned; whether they are justly valued, or unjustly despised; they are at least seen and known according to their true character, by him whom they

¹ Is. lvi. 11.

² Ezek. xxxiv. 2.

love and serve. Some may overlook them, for the disciple of Christ does not push himself forward ; some may condemn them, for many think that they are following a shadow ; some may think them hypocrites, for much that is undeserved is often laid to their charge : but however this be, their heavenly shepherd sees and distinguishes them, and judges them according to what they are, and not according to what they are not. *I know my sheep*, he has said. This proves the aptness of the comparison, which likens him to a shepherd, and his followers to a flock. For a stranger and common observer, looking towards a flock of sheep, would confound one with another, and think it impossible to discern between them ; while their shepherd, from the close attention and diligent care with which he has been long used to mark and study them, can tell them all ; and knows them by signs which another could neither perceive nor understand.

2. But this is not all that we are told. We are further assured, that as the shepherd knows the sheep, so the sheep their shepherd. *I know my sheep, and am known of mine*. They do not indeed know him by the hearing of the ear, or by the seeing of the eye. He is far above out of their sight, and his disciples, to whom he was at this time speaking, knew him in a way in which we cannot know him now. But this does not hinder our

knowing him in a true and proper sense ; that is, our trusting him, loving him, and serving him. The case is like that of a father, who may be in a foreign country ; but who maintains, and educates, and exhorts, and advises a child that remains at home. The child knows that father, though without seeing him. He knows what he is to the father, and what the father is to him, and what he does for him. In the same manner do the sheep of Christ know their shepherd. They “ have not seen, and yet have believed.” As St. Peter says, “ Whom, not having seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”³ He has left his invitation, “ Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden.” They have heard this call, as if addressed to themselves : and they have attended to it, and have come to him by faith and prayer, and have desired to escape from a dangerous world, and to place themselves within his fold. Thus they have joined themselves to his flock, sought shelter under his care, and know in whom they are trusting. When, therefore, Jesus has left this truth written, *I am known of mine*, he means that he is known by those who believe in him, not in a visionary or enthusiastic manner, not by dreams or fancies ; but in that sober intelligent way in which a parent is known

³ 1 Peter i. 8.

by his children, or a master by his servant, or a commander by his soldiers. They know him as the child knows that he looks to his parent for support ; as a servant knows that he looks to his master for direction ; as the soldier looks up to his commander for encouragement and example. In this way the Christian depends on Christ, in his passage through the world : takes him as his pattern, obeys him as his lord, reverences him as the author of his spiritual being, and loves him as the giver of eternal life.

Let all ask themselves, whether the Lord Jesus is thus known to them ? If they belong to the true flock, they must have this acquaintance with their Shepherd.

And great indeed is the comfort springing from these words. The world in which we live has been reduced by sin to a state, which makes it no longer a pasture in which God's people may enjoy themselves, but a wilderness in which they are too likely to go astray. But in this wilderness there is still a fold, and those within it shall dwell safely ; and in this fold a flock is gathered together :—of all ages, some young, and some old ; and of all ranks, some high, and many low : and over this flock a shepherd watches, and knows every one, whether young or old, rich or poor,—knows every one that is his own. And he too, in his turn, is known by them ; they are conscious that they are not alone ; their shepherd careth for

them ; and under his guidance they “ shall never perish ;” for he came that they “ might have life, and have it more abundantly.”

LECTURE LIII.

JESUS DESCRIBES HIS FLOCK, AS HEARING HIS VOICE AND FOLLOWING HIM.

JOHN X. 19—30.

19. *There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.*

20. *And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad : why hear ye him ?*

21. *Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind ?*

Thus is “ wisdom justified of her children.” The words which were spoken “ as never man spake ;” the deeds which no man could do “ except God were with him,”—were sufficient proofs in what authority Jesus came. Those received them as such, whose hearts were “ prepared for the Lord.” Those were convinced by them, whose

hearts were not hardened through sin, or occupied with the interests of this present world: for they said, *These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?*

22. *And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.*

23. *And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch.*

24. *Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.*

25. *Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.*

26. *But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.*

27. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

28. *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*

29. *My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*

30. *I and my Father are one.*¹

Here again, Jesus compares those who believe in him to a flock, "the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand." He speaks of them as being given him of his Father, to be redeem-

¹ One essence. The original is in the neuter gender.

ed by his blood, sanctified by his grace, and reserved for an eternal inheritance: defended by his own power, and his Father's power, from the temptations of the world and the malice of Satan. *I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man (any one) pluck them out of my hand.*

Thus close is the connexion between the Redeemer and the redeemed. But the same scripture which declares their privileges, describes also their character by marks which cannot be mistaken. *My sheep hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow me.*

The first sign, then, by which the Lord knows his flock, is that they *hear his voice*. They hear his voice, saying unto them, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." This is the first voice they hear, calling them to renounce a perishing world, and to shun the deceitfulness of sin, and to seek an eternal inheritance. But it is not once only that they hear his summons. Sheep that are well attended, are constantly obedient to their shepherd's voice; and the sheep of Christ are always anxious to hear and receive his word. There they find comfort and instruction: they read it, they pray over it, they meditate upon it, they prize it above all things:

saying “ Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” “ Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law :” may be guarded by its warnings, led by its directions, and supported by its promises. Whatever conveys to them the mind and the will of their good Shepherd, they humbly and willingly receive.

Thus they hear the Redeemer’s voice ; and I should add, they hear no other. The flock of Christ “ will not follow a stranger, but flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.” One may come, and beckon them out of the safe pasture, out of the straight-forward road of the Bible. Some may allure them with the pleasures of sin, others may promise them the treasures of this world : or some may pretend that there are other ways of reaching heaven, besides that which Christ has taught ; that there is no need of becoming “ a peculiar people,” purified by the Holy Spirit, and “ redeemed from all iniquity.” Some there have been, and always will be, to say such things ; but this is the voice of strangers : the true flock will not listen to it, but will answer at once, This is not the voice which I have been accustomed to hear : I know it not, neither will I follow it, for it will lead me to destruction.

Observe now the second mark by which, as we are here told, the Shepherd distinguishes his sheep. — *They follow him.* The Scripture sets before them

the path which their Saviour trod: and their endeavour is, to follow his steps. In this country indeed, the sheep do not commonly follow after the shepherd, but go before him. But in many countries, the shepherd still leads the way, and the flock follow him into that pasture where he intends them to feed. According to this practice, our Lord says, *my sheep follow me*. And follow him they must, if they would be known as his, here or hereafter.

They must follow him in HOLINESS. His language is, “be ye holy, for I am holy.” “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” They must follow him also in LOVE. By this, he says, “shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye have love one towards another.” “The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.” They must follow him too in SELF-DENIAL. He has expressly said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” They must follow him in MEEKNESS, in HUMILITY. “This mind must be in them, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Thus in a quiet and lowly spirit, in a spirit which pleases not itself, in charity of heart and practice, in a pure and blameless life, must the sheep of Christ tread in their Shepherd’s path, as they walk towards their Shepherd’s heavenly fold. And those who are walking thus, are the flock of whom Jesus spoke, when he said, *They shall*

never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. He says it not of those, although they may be called by his name, who range the world at pleasure, doing what they list, and going where their evil inclinations lead them: but he says it of those who place themselves under his care, are directed by his guidance, and governed by his rules. These have a protection which nothing can overcome: they have a power around them and within them, which, notwithstanding many conflicts and many trials, will finally prevail. He whose call they have heard, whose voice they have followed, shall *give unto them eternal life.* “For it is not the will of his Father which is in heaven,” that one of the flock of Christ shall ever perish.

LECTURE LIV.

THE WORKS DONE BY CHRIST PROVED
HIM TO BE ONE WITH THE FATHER.

JOHN X. 31—42.

In the discourse which we last considered, the Lord had declared the safety of his sheep, by reason of the care which protected them. *My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and*

no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.

This might be interpreted in two ways. He might mean that they are one in will, one in sentiment, one in interest. For in that sense he speaks of his people even on earth as one with God: when he prays for them, that they all may be one, "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."¹

Thus high are those exalted by the word of truth, whose faith has brought them within the fold of Christ.

Our Lord, however, when he declares that he and his Father are one, has a further and a higher sense than this, that they are one in counsel and in purposes. He means also, that they are one in nature and essence; so that each might be termed with equal truth, "the mighty God, the everlasting Father."² He means to explain the name by which he was called, the name "Immanuel, God with us."³ He means to interpret the prophetic psalm, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."⁴ He means to interpret the call which was given to "the cities of Judah, Behold your God."⁵ He thus led the way to his apostles, who taught afterwards, that he was "God over

¹ John xvii. 11, 21.

² Is. ix. 6.

³ Is. vii. 14.

⁴ Ps. xlv. 6; compare Heb. i. 8.

⁵ Is. xl. 9.

all, blessed for ever:" that "God was manifest in the flesh:" that he is the true God, and eternal life."⁶

This important mystery, and this consoling truth, we can only receive as it is revealed to us. Till we can discover the nature of God, we shall not be able to discover the way in which the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God.⁷ St. Paul has reckoned it among the things which shall hereafter constitute the blessedness of the "saints in light," that they shall no longer "know in part, but know even as they are known."⁸

But is it certain that we do not mistake the sense in which Christ intended to declare that he and his Father are one? That is made certain by the answer of the Jews to whom he spoke, and by the effect which his words produced upon their minds.

31. *Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.*

32. *Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father: for which of those works do ye stone me?*

33. *The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.*

⁶ Rom. ix. 5; Phil. ii. 6; 1 Tim. iii. 16; 1 John v. 20.

⁷ Athanasian Creed.

⁸ 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

34. *Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?*

35. *If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken:*

36. *Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?*

Here, as in many places, the Jews are answered by an argument which might silence themselves. Their scripture, (that scripture which came by inspiration of God, and *cannot be broken*, cannot err :) their scripture called the rulers of the people *gods*: for it commands, “Thou shalt not revile the gods; nor curse the ruler of thy people.”⁹ And another passage says, “Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High”¹ If those, then, are called by this lofty term, whom even on earth God has raised to honour, *Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?* may not he be well deserving of that title who doeth the works of God, and shows by those works that he is one with the Father? The word *god* is used in Scripture to distinguish rulers and magistrates, as “God’s ministers,” “powers ordained of

⁹ Exod. xxii. 28.

¹ Ps. lxxxii. “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.”

God.” So that were he even a prophet and no more; were he but another Moses, or another Elijah, whom *God had sanctified and sent into the world*;—he might without blasphemy be styled the Son of God. Let them consider this; let this show them, that he could not justly be accused of blasphemy.

And then let them go on, and consider more. He showed them sufficient proofs, that he was what he claimed to be: works which might make them say, “When Christ cometh, will he do greater things than these? works which might lead them to be convinced, “Truly this is the Son of God.” What more could be alleged, than he did allege? He gave all the evidence which could be required, he gave the only proof which is possible, when he said,

37. *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.*

38. *But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.*

In this way, at many former times, God had declared the divine commission of his servants. Thus Moses had shown that he acted in the name of God: thus Elijah, and Elisha his successor, had been sanctioned; and now God, who “had in times past spoken unto their fathers by the prophets,” thus proved that he “spoke unto them by

his Son.” But their hearts were hardened, and their eyes closed against truth.

39. *Therefore they sought again to take him : but he escaped out of their hand,*

40. *And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized ; and there he abode.*

41. *And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle ; but all things that John spake of this man were true.*

42. *And many believed on him there.*

The belief of some, and the unbelief of others, are alike an example to us now. Both parties saw the same works, both heard the same words. But some believed, and others believed not. Where was the difference? In their minds, in their hearts. How could they believe, who “loved the praise of men more than the praise of God?” How could they believe, who “loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil?” And how can any believe, to any good effect, while a love of the world, and the things that are in the world, perverts their reason, and blinds their moral sight? It is because men are not really willing to do the will of God, that they do not so acknowledge the truth of his word, as to make it the rule of their thoughts and practice.

Yet, O Lord, “to whom shall we go?” Believing or unbelieving, death will find us, and

we shall enter upon an everlasting existence. Open thou our hearts, now while it is time, that we may see the wonders of thy law, and lay hold on eternal life, as thy unspeakable gift, through Jesus Christ.

LECTURE LV.

THE SICKNESS OF LAZARUS, BROTHER
OF MARTHA AND MARY.

JOHN xi. 1—6.

1. *Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.*

2. *(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)*

3. *Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*

4. *When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

5. *Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus.*

6. *When he had heard, therefore, that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.*

This chapter introduces us to the character and domestic interests of a family which deserves our close attention. It is distinguished by this peculiar honour, that *Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus*. Surely those must be regarded as truly blessed, who obtained the love of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world! Whatever may be thought of such a distinction now, the time will arrive when no other will be prized. When “this world passeth away, and the lust thereof,” blessed are they of whom it may be said, He who is “coming in clouds and great glory,” he who is seated “on the throne of his glory,” is he who loveth them.

If we are sensible of this, we shall examine into what we know of the character of this family, and consider how far it is open to our imitation.

The blessedness which they were enjoying, as distinguished by the love of Jesus, had its commencement in their faith.

They perceived the character in which he came, and acknowledged the object of his coming. One of the sisters says to him, in a discourse which soon follows, “Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.”

Now there were but few to whom grace to perceive this was given, during the sojourn of Jesus on earth in his state of humiliation. Some said,

“He deceiveth the people;” others said, “Shall Christ come out of Galilee?” And the multitude, we may suppose, pursued their usual concerns, and paid little heed to the subject. These, however, saw the truth. And what was still more important, they acted on it. For this too was not the case with all. We are told that “many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.”¹ These were not of that party. They confessed him openly, and received him willingly. When the purposes of his ministry carried him to their neighbourhood, theirs was the house to which he used to resort with his disciples.² And the opportunity of instruction which they thus enjoyed, was neither lost nor thrown away. Martha, indeed, on one recorded occasion, “was cumbered about much serving:” was too busily occupied in the duties of hospitality to profit by her divine visitor. But “Mary sat at his feet, and heard his word.” And the blessings which she was conscious of, the debt which she owed to Him who had taught her to “choose that good part” which should be her’s for ever, this debt she was eager to repay by all the means she had: by zealous fervent love. *It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair.*

Now the Lord Jesus is no respecter of persons :

¹ John xii. 42.

² Luke xii. 38 ; John xii. 1.

That which attracts his love, is the character. And where there is a character like that of Mary, and Martha her sister, and Lazarus, there also will his love be still bestowed. Ask yourselves, then, What think ye of Jesus? Do you recognize him, as Martha did, to be “the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world?”

Concerning this, however, you have no hesitation. But is this belief any more than an inward conviction; a conviction not manifested by your life, not evidenced by your practice, not tending to make you “a peculiar people, redeemed from all iniquity, and zealous of good works?” Do you prize the Lord’s words, and make a sacrifice, as Mary did, to hear and study them? She risked the appearance of neglecting her guests; she encountered the rebuke of a sister who was dear to her, that she might listen to the words of eternal life. Do you act likewise? Are you also ready to spend what is precious to you in doing honour to your Saviour? This Mary did. She “took a pound of ointment of spikenard very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.”³ “This ointment might have been sold for much;” but she valued him more than all. And it is useful to inquire of ourselves, what we are willing to part with for Christ’s sake: that is, to relieve his people, to promote his religion, to make his salvation more widely known,

³ John xii. 3.

can we consent to expend what might otherwise increase our comforts, or gratify vanity, or minister to luxury?

By such sentiments and such practice we may be enabled to secure the love of Christ, as Mary and Martha did. He comes to such, and makes his abode with them. “Whosoever hears the word of God and keeps it, the same is his brother, and sister, and mother.”

And now observe the blessedness of this. All these faithful disciples, as in their ordinary life they have a certain guide to direct them, so in their calamities and difficulties they have a resource to which they confidently turn. Lazarus was seized with illness. *Therefore his sisters sent unto Jesus saying, Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick.* It was a comfort to them, that they had one to whom they might communicate their distress. But that might be done to a fellow-creature. Here was more. He was one who could not only comfort, but relieve and save. Neither was it necessary to tell the want, in order that it might be known. Though our heavenly Father expects us to disclose our requests in prayer and supplication, he knows what we have need of before we ask him. So Jesus knew the state of Lazarus. The fact and the event were already present to his mind. No sooner was the message brought to him, than he said, *This sickness is not unto death,*

but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Not a circumstance happens to one of his flock, but he sees the whole; its beginning and its end; its present and its future consequences. If only that can be truly said, which was said here, *he whom thou lovest*;—if he who is in trouble, in pain, in peril, is one whom Jesus loves:—then we may be sure that the rest follows; this sorrow is not unto death, *but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*

Still there is an appointed time, and that may not be yet. *When Jesus had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.* This is a very instructive fact; and shows how unpromising an aspect things may bear which are intended to have a joyful termination. There are reasons, doubtless, why God for a while withholds his aid: reasons why he permits sorrow to be long felt, and pain to be long endured: reasons why the mind which is devoted to him, is allowed to remain under a cloud: reasons why he suffers temptations to continue urgent, and disquiet the soul. These reasons we can sometimes perceive and be comforted by them; but often they are concealed from us: as in the present case it was impossible to understand, why Jesus should remain two days in the place where he was, after the intelligence had reached him that Lazarus, whom he loved, was on the bed of death.

So that the sister, in her anguish, exclaimed, on his arrival, “ Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” David had much experience of this, and has left us the result: saying, “ I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”⁴

LECTURE LVI.

JESUS RESOLVES ON GOING TO THE HOUSE OF LAZARUS.

JOHN xi. 7—16.

7. *Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again.*

8. *His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?*

⁴ Ps. xlii.

9. *Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.*

10. *But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.*

The disciples are here answered in a kind of parable. They remonstrated, as it was natural they should, at what appeared to them his rashness in returning to that district, where the Jews not two months before had sought his life; and they understood not yet, that no man could take that life from him, till he should be pleased to lay it down of himself. But he reminded them of a higher consideration than that of personal safety—the consideration of duty. *Are there not twelve hours in the day?* Is there not a certain time allotted to man on earth, and in that time a certain duty to be performed? *If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.* Whoever is found in the way of duty, is safe, and need fear no enemy, no opposition. He has a light to guide him, by which all mankind ought to be directed, the light of God's will: he has also a light to cheer him, the light of God's countenance. *But if a man walk in the night he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.* If any one neglects the counsel of God, and follows the counsel of the world, or the devices of his own heart, *he stumbleth: there is no light in him, but*

that which leads to deceive, and ends in disappointment or in ruin.

This sets an important thought before us. *Are there not twelve hours in the day?* Is there not a span of life assigned to man? And has he not in those twelve short hours a vast work to perform? Has he not a soul to save? Has he not an evil nature to subdue, and a holy nature to acquire? “This I say, brethren, the time is short.” Are we using it for its proper purpose? Or, “why stand we here all the day idle?” *The night cometh when no man can work.*

Another point is to be noticed. There is a light of the world, in which if a man walk, he stumbleth not. *But if he walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.* Christ “is come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not abide in darkness.”¹ By him we are instructed in the course which we should keep, so as to walk both safely to ourselves and usefully to others. Without him, *there is no light in us.* Our way is error, and our end destruction.

11. *These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.*²

¹ John xii. 46.

² The verb which signifies *to sleep*, was commonly used in Greek for *to be dead*. So, (1 Thess. iv. 15,) “They that are alive at the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them *that are asleep* :” i. e. have died before.

12. *Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.*

13. *Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.*

14. *Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.*

15. *And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.*

16. *Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus,³ unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.*

Thomas said this, not knowing what he said; not perceiving that it needed more of divine grace than had yet been bestowed on himself or his brethren, to be faithful unto death. But it was a good thought, and arose from a proper feeling. *Let us also go, that we may die with him.* The friend who has directed us, and given us sweet counsel: the master who has instructed us, who has “the words of eternal life;”—if he is resolved to persevere in the path of duty to the end, and that end the grave:—*let us also go, that we may die with him,* and at least show our love and faithfulness, if we cannot prevent the malice of his enemies.

In one sense, though not in the sense intended by the apostle, we are all required to make a like resolve. Jesus set his face steadily to go to

³ That is, the Twin.

Bethany, though well aware, that it was the step between him and death. The miracle which he should perform there would excite the Jews still more violently against him, and his death would quickly ensue. His hour was come, the twelfth hour of his day: and he went in perfect foreknowledge "what death he should die." God had committed to him a work: and "how was he straitened till it was accomplished?" This work was the satisfaction for sin. "In that he died, he died unto sin."

We too have a work before us, in the accomplishment of which our safety rests. Our work is the mortification of sin. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." This, therefore, is the object which demands our resolution. Let us also go; go in our hearts and minds to the contemplation of his cross, that we may die with him unto sin. "It is a faithful saying, If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." "Therefore reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."⁴

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12. Rom. vi. 8—11.

LECTURE LVII.

JESUS DESCRIBES HIMSELF TO MARTHA
AS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

JOHN xi. 17—27.

17. *Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.*

18. *Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off :*

19. *And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.*

20. *Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him : but Mary sat still in the house.*

21. *Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*

22. *But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.*

23. *Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.*

24. *Martha said unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*

25. *Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live :*

26. *And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this ?*

Martha here expresses her confident assurance, that her brother should rise again. Such was the belief of all among the Jewish people who rightly

interpreted the Scriptures, though it was left for Christ himself to declare in plain terms, that “all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”¹ It was left for him to bring life and immortality to clear light, which could not be concealed. Still the obedience of Abraham, the self-denial of Moses, the courage of Daniel, the faithfulness of Isaiah, of Jeremiah, of the many prophets whose blood cried out against Jerusalem, prove sufficiently that these all felt confident that they should “attain a better resurrection.” Martha, therefore, spoke the sentiments of all the best and most pious among her countrymen, when she declared her full assurance that *her brother should rise again*. Martha too had already heard the same truth affirmed by her beloved Lord, as the foundation of all he did and taught: as the reason of his coming into the world; namely, that “we must all stand before the judgment seat of God, to receive according to the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad.” Therefore Martha had no hesitation in saying, *I know that he shall rise again at the last day*.

Jesus, however, now discloses to her a mystery which she could not yet fully comprehend; and tells her to associate with himself every idea she might conceive of the resurrection. She had be-

¹ John v. 28, 29.

lieved in a life to come. She had believed, that Abel was not allowed to be a loser, and forfeit all existence, “because by faith he offered a better sacrifice than Cain,” and fell by his vengeance. She had believed that Enoch, when taken of God, had been taken not to death, but to life : she had believed that God, when he was distinguished as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was the God of them still living, and not having ceased to be : she had believed also the words of Christ, when he had warned her to “labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.” But she was now taught a further lesson. She was instructed never to think of everlasting life, except as connected with Christ as its author ; who alone will be the cause, if the future world be a blessing to any soul of man. He is *the resurrection and the life* : he is “the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

Martha could as yet know this but imperfectly. The scheme of man’s redemption was not yet fully disclosed. And even now that it is fulfilled, and plainly revealed, how common is it, and how distressing, to hear a future life spoken of as a life that must be happy : to hear death represented as securing ease and comfort :—with no mention of Him who is alone *the resurrection and the life* ; with no reference to that faith in him, which God has promised to count unto us for righteousness. We talk of a better world : we talk of the happi-

ness of heaven ; and forget that there is a sting in death—the sting of sin ; and that he alone can remove that sting, who now tells Martha to look on him *as the resurrection and the life*, who giveth us the victory, and in whom whosoever believeth shall not die eternally.

He asks her with pointed earnestness, *Believest thou this ?*

27. *She saith unto him, Yea, Lord : I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.*

This is the truth, which was the basis of all the rest. He was *the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world*. This Martha knew ; and she would soon know more clearly what only his death could reveal, and his resurrection confirm : that “ as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive ; ” that when “ all were dead, he died for all, ” that *whosoever liveth and believeth in him may never die*. The body indeed shall die ; shall lose its beauty and its powers : shall moulder in the grave. The sentence is still without remission, “ Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. ” Still the man shall live : shall be conscious of existence : for his soul shall return to God who gave it, to the Saviour who redeemed it, to the Holy Ghost who purified it, and so shall “ ever be with the Lord. ” And in the end, when this world passeth away, “ the dead in

Christ shall rise ;” he shall “ change their vile body that it may be made like unto his glorious body,” and “ be with him where he is, and behold the glory which he had with the Father” from the beginning. This is the truth which he has disclosed, and which by his own resurrection he has sealed. He “ being risen from the dead, is become the first fruits of them that slept ;” the earnest of that vast harvest, when all that has been “ sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption,” and enter upon a state that shall have no end.

Let all put the question to themselves which Jesus put to Martha, *Believest thou this ?* We all believe it ; and yet how little is it seen in our lives that we have this conviction within ! How few admit the thought, This year, this day, I may die, and dying, enter upon an eternal world ! Can we proceed, and say, “ But none of these things move me, neither count I my earthly life dear unto myself :” for “ I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep what I have committed to him.” He is *the resurrection and the life*. He is my *life* here on earth : for “ the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” He will be my *life* in the world that is to come : for though he “ died for our sins,” he “ rose again for our justification ;” and is now set down for ever at the right hand of the Majesty on high, that he

may fulfil the merciful assurance that *whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die.*

Here then is comfort for a dying bed. Not the comfort of the ignorant, who says, that such must be the end of all, without reflecting on what may follow. Not the comfort of the atheist, who calls death the debt of nature. What consolation does that thought supply! But here is the Prince of Life, who says, *Though thou art dying, though there is a bottomless pit far more dreadful than the grave, he that believeth in me shall never die.*

LECTURE LVIII.

JESUS ACCOMPANIES MARY AND MARTHA TO THE GRAVE OF LAZARUS.

JOHN xi. 28—40.

28. *And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.*

29. *As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.*

30. *Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.*

31. *The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose*

up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

32. *Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*

33. *When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,*

34. *And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.*

35. *Jesus wept.*

36. *Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!*

37. *And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?*

We have sufficient proof here, if proof were needed, that Jesus did not merely bear the form and fashion of a man, but the nature and feeling too. He saw around him a scene of grief: those who were thus mourning, were persons in whom he took that peculiar interest which belongs to what we call *friendship*; and their grief excited in him those emotions of sorrow, that sympathy which we cannot withhold when we witness distress in those we love. *Jesus wept.* Though he was inwardly conscious, that a very short period would elapse before that sorrow was turned into joy, yet the sorrow and the signs of it were present, and he did not resist the sympathetic feeling which they excited in him. *Jesus wept.*

The Holy Spirit, who guided the sacred writers into all truth, has recorded this circumstance. Had it not been Jesus who wept, had not Jesus, who wept, been the Son of God, it would not have been an important circumstance. But now it is full of consolation : it assures us how deep an interest he feels in those who devote themselves to him, as Martha and Mary did : it encourages us in every thing with freedom and boldness to make our supplications known before him : it teaches us more surely than words could teach us, that we do not commit ourselves to a master “who cannot be touched with our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”¹ Here too we learn another lesson. Philosophy did not teach it ; sometimes it pretended to teach otherwise : but he who knows the circumstances and the heart of man, here shows us, that it is no sin and no reproach to be affected with our own sorrows and those of our friends. Nay, it is part of that brotherly kindness which the gospel cherishes, to make all men take a share in the circumstances of their neighbours ; to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”

38. *Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.*

39. *Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord,*

¹ Heb. iv. 15.

by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.

40. *Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?*

It is to be observed here, that Jesus does not remove the stone. He alone could raise the body which lay buried within: but they could take away the stone which closed up the cave. It had been easy for him to say, "Get thee hence, and be cast into the sea:" but to no purpose, as his power was not required.

So towards effecting that greater work, the salvation of the soul, he commands us to strive, and labour, and use all diligence. The exhortations could hardly be stronger, if our diligence could achieve every thing, and it were not God, who "of his good pleasure worketh in us both to will and to do." Our safety does depend upon his grace, "which is sufficient for us;" upon his prayer "that our faith fail not;" but, meanwhile, he requires us to "watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation." It is "by the power of God that men are kept, through faith, unto salvation:" but nevertheless, "he that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

Martha objects to the removal of the stone, and urges the state in which the corpse might be expected to be found, as *he had been dead four days.*

He rebukes her, but with gentleness: *Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?*

So we are taught, that when God speaks, we must take his promise for a reality, his word as a certainty. Our faith must be to us “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

When Abraham, at God’s command, took Isaac his son and prepared to offer him up in sacrifice, he did this, we are told, believing “that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.”² He had no doubt of God’s performing his original promise, that in the seed of Abraham should “all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Therefore he reasoned with himself, However unaccountable it may appear, the promise cannot fail: God will fulfil his word, and raise my son to life again.

And the example is instructive. It shows us how to use God’s word. Does he say, “Call upon me in the day of trouble?” and can we suppose that he has given this encouragement, and will yet suffer his people to call upon him in vain? Perhaps, like Martha, you have waited through days of darkness and weeks of perplexity; have suffered in spirit, through a powerful temptation, and an unbelieving heart. Yet consider these words as addressed to you;—*Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see*

² Heb. xi. 19.

the glory of God? Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest persevere in the path of duty, thou shouldest see the light of God's countenance shining out at last through the gloom and cloudiness of the day? Said I not unto the penitent, "Return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon thee?" Said I not to him that is tempted, "Resist the devil, and he shall flee from thee?" Said I not unto the afflicted, "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy?" Why then should the mourner say, There is no mercy for me? Why should the offender say, I cannot get the mastery over my evil passions? Why should the afflicted say, "God hideth his face away from me in displeasure?" This is thine infirmity. It must be contended against. For such cases, and for all cases, God has left it written, "Look unto me, and be saved." "They shall seek me, and they shall find me, if they seek me with their whole heart." *If thou canst believe, thou shalt see the glory of God.*

This we do believe. But temptation turns our belief into unbelief: and we must seek his Spirit more and more, that we may be able not only to read his promises, but to apply them to ourselves.

LECTURE LIX.

JESUS RECALLS LAZARUS TO LIFE.

JOHN xi. 41—44.

41. *Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.*

42. *And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.*

It pleased the Lord on this occasion to show the intimate connexion between himself and his Father. This miracle was especially intended to display his power. He had stated from the first, that the sickness of Lazarus was not unto death, but *for the glory of God, and that the Son of God might be glorified thereby*. For *the glory of God*, that the provision which he had made for the recovery of his sinful creatures might be clearly seen:—and *that the Son of God might be glorified*; since none could doubt whether he came forth from God, who could thus loose the bands of death, and reani-

mate the lifeless body. Therefore he makes a direct appeal to heaven. *Because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.*

43. *And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.*

44. *And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.*

This exercise of divine power gave fresh force to his assurance concerning every one that believeth on him: "I will raise him up at the last day."¹ What took place in the case of Lazarus, shall take place with all. In the fulness of time, he will call upon "the sea to give up its dead, and death and hell to deliver up the dead that are in them,"² and all nations shall be gathered before him. We are here assured of his power to do so. To restore animation to the lifeless corpse, to reunite the soul to the body after they have been four days separated, is no less the work of omnipotence, than to raise those who have lain in the grave four hundred or four thousand years. As, then, he here said to Lazarus, *Come forth; and he that was dead came forth*; so will he hereafter say to all who have ever returned to their native dust, *Come forth*. Arise, ye dead, and pre-

¹ John vi. 40, &c.

² Rev. xx. 13.

pare to meet your God. St. John, who witnessed this miracle, was afterwards permitted in a vision to witness that of which this miracle is an example: and he writes,—“ I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God.”³

But though all shall alike arise, all shall not rise to the same destiny. “ All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”⁴ All, therefore, shall hear the same voice, but not all in the same tone. Jesus had loved Lazarus, for he had received him in his true character, and had adhered to him as “ the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.” Therefore when Lazarus awakened from his sleep, and light returned to his eyes, and his mind regained its consciousness, the first object which his eyes and his mind would rest upon, was his friend, his divine benefactor, commanding those around him to loose him from his bands, and set him free in the enjoyment of life and liberty.

But consider for a moment how grievous his case would have been, if instead of joy, misery had awaited his resurrection. He did see around him those whom he most valued: the sisters to whom he was so dear, and the many friends who had shown their interest in him, and had “ come to

³ Rev. xx. 12.

⁴ John v. 28, 29.

Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother." But suppose these circumstances changed. Suppose that Lazarus had revived, only to be separated from all that he loved ; only to be given up to the power of his worst enemy ; only to be consigned to a place of darkness and despair, where no voice was heard but that of remorse and agony : only to know that he was " shut out from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, and to dwell in " the blackness of darkness for ever." We cannot justly picture to ourselves the horror of such a resurrection.

Yet such will be the resurrection of the ungodly and the sinner. They will be called forth, not by a friendly voice inviting them to " enter into the joy of their Lord : " but by the summons of a judge, who makes a difference " between the righteous and the wicked ; " " between him who serveth God, and him who serveth him not."⁵ They have not done the will of God, they have not " heard the word and kept it : " and therefore will not see before them the countenance of one who is to them as a father, or a brother ;⁶ who has more than all the tenderness of the nearest earthly relationship : but of one who is " ashamed of them," who " never knew them," even though they might have called him " Lord, Lord."⁷ The kingdom of heaven is not theirs, nor their society " the

⁵ See Mal. iii. 18.

⁶ See Mat. xii. 48. Mal. ii. 33.

⁷ See Matt. vii. 28.

spirits of just men made perfect : ” their portion is “ everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

It is needful to bring these thoughts before our minds, that we may use the present time as Lazarus and his sisters did, and secure to ourselves the favour of our judge, now that “ we are in the way with him.” Provide, in this your day, for a blessed resurrection. Do not so live here, that you may rise to see other redeemed souls entering into the mansions of eternal glory, and “ yourselves thrust out.” Do not so live here, that when you rise again to another existence, you must be excluded from the presence of all that is holy, pure, and happy, and take your place for ever among “ the angels that sinned.” Accustom yourselves now to hear the voice which shall say at last, *Come forth*. Know it here, when it calls you to repentance and to righteousness, and ye shall know it in the end, when it calls you to “ stand before God.” Be his believing and obedient people here, and ye shall not “ die eternally.”

LECTURE LX.

THE COUNSEL OF CAIAPHAS THAT JESUS
SHOULD BE PUT TO DEATH.

JOHN xi. 45—57.

45. *Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.*

46. *But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.*

47. *Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.*

48. *If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.*

Observe the nature of this inquiry of the chief priests and Pharisees. They do not consider what they ought to do, but what it was their interest to do. They could not deny, that *this man doeth many miracles*. Why then not recognize him as the Christ? Why not follow up the natural impression made on the less prejudiced people, who said, (chap. vii. 31,) “When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath

done?" For this reason, and no other; that in such case they must resign their pre-eminence, and all belonging to it. Therefore the miracles could not have their proper effect upon them: any more than light upon an eye which is diseased. So afterwards when the apostles began to proclaim their message, and to confirm it by like works of power, the elders of Israel conferred among themselves, (Acts iv. 16, 17,) "saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no farther among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name."

After all, what is this, but ordinary practice? To see the truth, and not to follow it. Why does one man worship wealth? another pleasure? Why are multitudes living as those cannot and must not live, who are heirs of the heavenly kingdom? Is it that they have no belief in a world to come, that they expect no future difference between those who serve God and those who neglect him? Not so: but because present things have an influence over them which they cannot resist, and which nothing but the Holy Spirit can enable them to subdue.

49. *And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,*

50. *Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.*

51. *And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation ;*

52. *And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.*

Caiaphas here spoke the language of a worldly man. He first imagines to himself a danger which had no reality. *The Romans shall come, and take away both our place and nation.* Jesus might have taught his heavenly truths, and all men might have believed and followed him; and the Romans would have offered no interruption to the disciples of a master whose “kingdom was not of this world.”

Having thus devised an imaginary evil, he flies to injustice to remove it. *It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.* It could never be really expedient to commit an unjust deed, and shed innocent blood. And we cannot help remarking, that by this very injustice he made that danger real which he pretended to be avoiding. “When the lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto these husbandmen,” who cast out his son and slew him? “He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard

unto other husbandmen.”¹ And thus it was that the Romans did come, and *take away their place and nation*.

There was, however, in the words of Caiaphas, a deeper meaning than he knew. It was not, in the strict sense of the term, a *prophecy*: but it told beforehand that which proved true, *that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad*.

St. John, in his Revelation, describes one of the visions granted him. “I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb.”² This multitude are *the children of God*, then and now *scattered abroad*: living in distant ages and in distant places, differing in every outward circumstance, but *gathered together in one*: having “one Lord, one faith, one baptism;” united in a common bond on earth, that they “believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins;” and hereafter to be united for ever in the kingdom prepared for them. Wherever the gospel is faithfully set forth, we find that God has children who answer to the call of his word, and do not “receive his grace in vain.” Those, for example, were children of God, whom the Lord

¹ Matt. xxi. 40, 41.

² Rev. vii. 9.

spoke of to St. Paul in a vision, saying, (Acts xviii. 9,) “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I have much people in this city.” On that encouragement, he continued at Corinth “a year and six months, teaching the word of God amongst them.” And we know how large a congregation of Christians was there “added to the Lord.”

Those, however, are not always among his children, who in regard of outward privileges are nearest to their heavenly Father. That mercy which many of the heathen “received gladly,” the Jews themselves were now putting from them.

53. *Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.*

54. *Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.*

55. *And the Jews’ passover was nigh at hand; and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.*

56. *Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?*

57. *Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him.*

LECTURE LXI.

MARY ANOINTS THE FEET OF JESUS.

JOHN xii. 1—8.

1. *Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.*

2. *There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.*

3. *Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spike-nard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.*

4. *Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,*

5. *Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?*

6. *This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.*

It is seen in this transaction by a very vivid example, what it is to be alive unto God, and what it is to live to this present world. The nature of all life is eagerly to seize whatever nourishes it or is congenial to it. This sister of Lazarus was so

conscious of the benefits which she had received from the Lord Jesus, and so filled with her love towards him, that she was sensibly alive to every opportunity of doing him honour. Such an opportunity now offered; he was entertained at a friendly neighbour's house:¹ and it was a custom on great occasions, to show respect for distinguished guests, by anointing them with perfume. So she hastened for an alabaster box of ointment which she had, and *anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair*. Had she been alive to the opinion of others, she would not have risked their censure; and they did blame her. Had she been alive to her personal gratification, she would have kept this ointment for herself. But her heart was bound up with her Saviour, and only alive to any means of honouring him, at whose feet she had often sat, and received the words of eternal life.

The heart of Judas was in a state entirely different. He was alive only to this present world and its gains. So that when this box of spikenard was broken and emptied of its valuable contents, he at once perceived how his own advantage might have been served by it. The perfume might have been sold: its produce entrusted to his charge: and an opportunity of fraudulent profit would have been given him. He could not restrain his murmur of indignation: *Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?*

¹ See Matt. xxvi. 6.

How wise in their generation are the children of this world ! How keenly sensible to the objects before them !

7. *Then said Jesus, Let her alone : against the day of my burying hath she kept this.*

8. *For the poor always ye have with you : but me ye have not always.*

Jesus, as might be expected, approves and defends the affection and zeal of his disciple. Even if there had been any reasonable ground of blame, the occasion and the intention would have excused what was done. *Against the day of my burying hath she kept this.* Mary could not be aware of his approaching death : but she would lose no opportunity of displaying her love, and it would prove, that no other would remain to her. She would not always, nor indeed ever again, have him with her as now ; and could not do him honour when she pleased. *The poor always ye have with you*, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good : *but me ye have not always.*²

More, surely, is intimated by this remark, than the mere fact that “the poor shall never cease throughout the land.” Is it not intended, that they who have zeal and love like Mary’s, may still find occasion of exercising it in a manner agreeable to the Lord ?

² Compare Mark xiv. 7.

Nothing in scripture is clearer than the promise, that they who “seek first the kingdom of God,” shall not be suffered to want “other things” also. “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?”³ Yet we know that such are the reverses of life, that many must need assistance. The industry, the prudence, the self-denial of Christ’s disciples, undoubtedly secure them against many evils, which those experience who are not guided by a like principle. But still there must be poverty to be assisted, widows to be comforted, orphans to be educated, sickness to be relieved. *The poor always ye have with you.* These then are the objects to which a disposition like that of Mary will direct its care. That love which the Christian bears towards the Saviour, he will show towards all those to whom the Saviour is dear. His faith, his love, his zeal will spontaneously take that course. “Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” If he has really the love of God in him, he will love those whom God loves, the disciples of Christ Jesus: and if he loves them, he will show his love by assisting them in their difficulties and comforting them in their sorrows.

³ Matt. vi. 26. See the whole passage.

This was seen in the earliest history of the church, when a famine raged throughout a great part of the Roman empire. The Christians at Antioch heard this, by the report of those who had come from Jerusalem to Antioch. (Acts xi. 29.) “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea.” Was there, then, any connexion between the people of Antioch and the inhabitants of Judea? None;—except their attachment to the same Saviour. But as they loved him, though not having seen him; so the brethren also, not having seen, they loved, and supported with that assistance which their present necessities required.

Thus the love and gratitude which all who understand the value of their redemption must feel towards their Redeemer, has a constant object. We have not him with us in the world; but the poor of his flock are always with us: and if he is uppermost in our hearts, we shall seek to do them good, for his sake to whom they are endeared and united by the covenant of faith. So sure is this result, that St. John universally proposes it, in his epistle, as the test of our state before God. “We know,” he says, “that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

LECTURE LXII.

JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM IN TRIUMPH.
THE JEALOUSY OF THE PHARISEES.

JOHN xii. 9—19.

9. *Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.*

10. *But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;*

11. *Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.*

12. *On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,¹*

13. *Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the king of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

14. *And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,*

15. *Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.²*

These words make part of a psalm,³ which contains also many other prophecies, bearing re-

¹ Mat. xxi. 1—13. Mark xi. 1—10. Luke xix. 29—38.

² Zech. ix. 9.

³ Ps. cxviii. 25.

ference to the Saviour. *Hosanna*. "Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord." And these ought to have been the sentiments of the whole Hebrew nation at that day. The nation ought to have known, from the prediction of Daniel, that the time was now at hand when the covenant made with Adam and with Abraham should be fulfilled: the time "determined on, (Dan. ix. 24) to finish the transgression, and make reconciliation for iniquity:" the time when "Messiah the prince" should appear. Some individuals did discover this, and were "looking for the consolation of Israel." Such ought to have been the case with the whole nation: they ought to have been generally found united in prayer that "the commandment should go forth;"⁴ that God should "remember his holy covenant," and their eyes might "see his salvation." The word "*Hosanna*, save, Lord, I beseech thee," should not have ascended from the lips of Simeon alone, and Elizabeth, and Anna, and Zacharias, but from the whole people. And then, when the King had appeared, not indeed in the pomp of earthly grandeur, but clothed in robes of meekness and wisdom, and speaking the language of grace and truth, and manifesting forth his glory by deeds of goodness and mercy; he should have been greeted by the adoration of that favoured

⁴ See Dan. ix. 23.

country, that “peculiar people” which God had chosen for his own. It should not have been left to a few of his followers, or to a multitude casually assembled, as now, *that were come to the feast* ; it should not have been left for these to *take branches of palm trees*, or “strew their garments in the way,” and *go forth to meet him*. It should have been the cry of the whole city and the whole land, *Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord*. Blessed is he that cometh as the messenger of God, to announce to us his mercy : how he hath cast our transgressions behind his back, and forgiven our iniquity, and hath sent to us his offer of peace and reconciliation.

So it would have been, if Jerusalem had “known the time of her visitation.” But now it was “hid from her eyes.” Even the disciples who heard the prophecy applied to him, who saw him fulfilling in the most exact and unexpected manner the words of Zechariah, failed to interpret them. They needed that effusion of the Spirit which should “bring all things to their remembrance, and guide them into all truth.” For,

16. *These things understood not his disciples at the first : but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.*

17. *The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.*

18. *For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.*

19. *The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.*

If we could be disposed to wonder, why more of light was not bestowed upon the Jewish public, we see the reason in their conduct. They extinguished the light they had. A miracle was exhibited, in the sight of many, and within the knowledge of the whole city, which might silence all gainsayers. Lazarus was restored from the grave. But what ensued? Did they look on this as giving them the proof they needed? As showing that this was indeed *the king of Israel, coming in the name of the Lord?* *The chief priests, we read, consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death, because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.* And now they said among themselves, *Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold the world is gone after him.* Their thoughts are, not how they might discover the truth, but how they might conceal it: not how they might inquire whether Jesus was to be believed, but how they might hinder others from believing.

There must have been a cause for this. We trace it back indeed to the corrupt heart, which is “enmity against God,” and does not “like to retain him in its knowledge.” But this corruption

acts through certain channels. And with these Pharisees it was worldliness, love of power, pride of pre-eminence. *Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing?* how the distinction ye have been used to enjoy is fast departing from you? *Behold, the world is gone after him.* This was the fastness, in which Satan took his post; this “the palace,” in which “the strong man armed kept his goods in peace.” And to what lengths do these passions carry those who yield to them? To sins as much against the law of nature within the mind, as against the law of God written in the Bible. See Pharaoh, that he might keep the Israelites under his dominion, giving command that every male child should be destroyed. Follow Saul through his various deeds of cruelty, to which he was excited by his jealousy of David. See Herod, slaying the infants of a whole district from two years old and under, through a distant apprehension that his power might be disturbed. See Pilate reluctantly consenting to the death of Jesus, lest he should be accused before Cæsar, and his government be endangered. See here the Pharisees *taking counsel how they might put Lazarus to death, because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus.*

We are shocked at these enormities. But let us remember, that it is the nature of every evil passion to hurry men into crimes from which an uncorrupted conscience would revolt. No man can say

to any sin, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther. The axe must be laid to the root of the tree.

Do not therefore stifle, like the Pharisees, the first breath of conviction; do not resist as they did, the power that might convert them: but “keep thy heart with all diligence,” and pray for light to discover your most “secret faults,” lest they break out into “presumptuous sins.”

LECTURE LXIII.

JESUS INTIMATES THAT THE HOUR OF HIS CRUCIFIXION IS NEAR AT HAND.

JOHN xii. 20—33.

20. *And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast :*

21. *The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.*

22. *Philip cometh and telleth Andrew : and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.*

These were Gentiles by birth and residence. But from some favourable circumstances, they had become acquainted with the Jewish scriptures and

the Hebrew faith, and had turned so far from their national vanities, as to worship the living and true God, the Creator of the world. There were many such, like the Centurion whose servant was healed at Capernaum,¹ like Cornelius, whose “prayers and alms had come up as a memorial before God.”² But as they did not profess the religion of the Jews, the apostles hesitated, when they came to Philip, *saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.* The apostles were still strangers to the light which should “lighten the Gentiles.” But Jesus saw through the mist by which they were surrounded, and knew that the accomplishment of the prophecy was approaching, when kings should come to his light, and the Gentiles to the brightness of his rising.³ He replied in mysterious words.

23. *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

25. *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

The Son of man, coming to his own world, and his own people, had not been received with glory. The only triumph which he knew, was that just now recorded, when a colt, “an ass’s colt,” bore

¹ Matt. viii. 5.

² Acts x. 4.

³ Is. lxii. 2.

him into Jerusalem, and the multitude spread their garments before him. But now *the hour was come that the Son of man should be glorified*. He should burst the gates of the grave, and ascend to “the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.”

But it is not his own glory which affects the mind of Jesus. That glory, in its proper sense, admitted of no increase. His glory is man’s happiness, man’s salvation; the bringing immortal souls “from darkness to light,” from death to life, from “the power of Satan unto God.”

And how should this be accomplished? In real truth, the words, Now shall the Son of man *be glorified*, must be thus interpreted, Now shall the Son of man be crucified. The foundation of that glory must be laid on the cross, and in the grave. As the *corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die*, in order that it may *bring forth fruit*; and by dying sends up an abundant produce, nourished by itself, partaking of a nature like its own; so should it be in the kingdom of God. The seeds of an abundant harvest, “bringing many sons to glory,” must be sown in the grave.

This truth, which began with the Lord himself, extends to his disciples also. As he, their Master, counted not his life dear unto himself: so must those who follow him be prepared, in many trials, to *hate their life*, in this world, (to act as if hating it,) and they should *keep it unto life eternal*.

26. *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

27. *Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.*

28. *Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.*

29. *The people, therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.*

30. *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.*

31. *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.*

32. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

33. *This he said, signifying what death he should die.*

At first appearance, the event to which our Lord is here looking forward, would be the triumph of *this world*, not its *judgment*: the victory of *the prince of this world*, not his overthrow. As he said to the soldiers afterwards, “This is your hour and the power of darkness.” But he extends his view beyond: foresees the consequence of his death, by which in the end the world shall be overcome, and the dominion of Satan broken. He sees that his cross should do what nothing else had done; should be “the victory that overcometh

the world.” It is not only of his death, but the mode of his death, that he speaks. *I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.*

And it can be explained. That death was the severest punishment of sin; and he endured it as the penalty of sin. “He bore our sins in his own body;” he died, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” Now this furnishes to man that proof which he most needs, and is most slow and unwilling to receive—the proof of the sinfulness of sin: that is, of its heinousness in God’s sight, and of the consequences to which it leads. In the death of the cross we have a proof of this which no man can deny,⁴ unless he denies the whole history of Christ: a proof, too, from fact. Men may say, that “the worm which dieth not,” and “the fire that is not quenched,” and “the blackness of darkness for ever,” are figurative phrases by which nothing real is intended. Thus multitudes are deceived, as Eve was, and believe that they “shall not surely die,” though they transgress the laws which God hath commanded them to observe. Jesus, *lifted up from the earth*, and bearing the wrath of God upon the cross, speaks a different language. It was sin which

⁴ I do not, of course, mean, that this *is denied* by none who profess to receive the Scriptures; but that it cannot be denied with any consistency or show of reason.

reviled and buffeted him ; sin which pierced his hands and feet ; sin which made him melt in speechless agony ; sin which drew from him the last affecting words, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ”

With this fact before their eyes, none who believe it can venture upon sin as that which God notices not, which no evil follows. By the cross on which the ransom was paid, sin is crucified to them, and they to sin. And so his words are made good ; he being *lifted up from the earth, draws all men unto him* : gives them a motive and a reason why they should “ suffer with him,” should “ deny themselves,” should “ mortify the flesh with the affections and lusts,” and “ follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”

LECTURE LXIV.

THE HEARTS OF THE JEWS ARE HARD-
ENED THROUGH UNBELIEF.

JOHN xii. 34—43.

34. *The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever:¹ and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?*

35. *Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.*

36. *While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.*

37. *But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:*

38. *That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our*

¹ We have heard out of the Scripture: that is, "the law and the prophets." They had collected this from the general tenor of the prophecies: as, that "God would not fail David, but cause his seed to endure for ever:" that "of his government there should be no end."

report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

39. *Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,*

40. *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*

41. *These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*

42. *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.*

43. *For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

Jesus had given a solemn warning to the Jews; *Yet a little while is the light with you. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.*

But, adds St. John, *though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him.* As Isaiah had given reason to expect, when he prefaced his well-known prophecy, by asking, *Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?*² And again, *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*

² Is. liii. 1; and vi. 10.

We perceive, therefore, that something more is necessary to FAITH, than sufficient evidence. These had sufficient evidence, in the many miracles which he had done. These had sufficient evidence, for many were convinced by it. *Among the chief rulers also many believed on him ; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

It was not therefore evidence which was wanting, but a heart to receive evidence, to act upon conviction. And this heart man has not in himself; it is the gift of God, the work of the Holy Spirit. “No man can come unto me, (our Lord had already said,) unless the Father who hath sent me draw him.” The case was exactly the same with their forefathers in the wilderness: (Deut. xxix. 2—4,) when “Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.”

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Is he as one who “takes up that he layed not down, and reaps that he did

not sow ?”³ This we know can never be. “ God willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live.” And he calls upon the inhabitants of the whole earth to witness his dealings with his people : (Is. v. 3 :) “ And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it ? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes ?”

The fault, then, must have been in the Jews themselves, whose hearts were hardened. Let us consider their behaviour.

Jesus did among them works beyond the power of man. They could not deny it. What then ? Did they come forward in a body, and acknowledge with Nicodemus, “ Thou art a teacher come from God ?” Or say, like Simon Peter, “ Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God ?” No : they perverted the people’s minds, by affirming, “ This man doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils :”⁴ and agreed, that “ if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.”⁵

Again, in the course of Jesus’s teaching, many things fell from him which they either could not understand, or did not like to understand. What did they then ? Wait for further instruction ? In-

³ See Luke xix. 21.

⁴ Matt. xii. 24.

⁵ John ix. 22.

quire humbly, examine patiently? No. They complained, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it? From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."⁶

Others heard what they could not refute, and saw what they could not deny. *But*, as we are here told, *because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.*

Now without doubt God could have so changed the hearts of all these persons, that they should have cast away their worldly fears, and their presumptuous murmurings, and their obstinate defiance, and have fallen on their knees before Jesus, confessing, "Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." He did this in the case of Saul, and stopped his career of malice and blasphemy. "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." "And who art thou, O man, who repliest against God?"⁷

But such is not the usual course of his dealings with men. "The earth which drinketh in the rain which cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God."⁸ This is the ordinary rule. While "he that being often reprovéd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."⁹ So it proved with

⁶ John vi. 60. 66.

⁷ See Rom. ix. 16. 19.

⁸ Heb. vi. 7.

⁹ Prov. xxix. 1.

this generation ;—as Isaiah had foretold, *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart ; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted.* There is nothing uncommon either in the conduct of the Jews, their hardness of heart ; or in its consequence, their rejection. Some of them turned away their eyes from evident truth : could not deny it, but would not see it. How many do the same ! cast aside the book which they are unable to refute, but unwilling to be ruled by :—avoid the preacher, who presses closely upon their consciences, with much the same words perhaps as were used towards our Lord himself :—“he perverteth the people :”—“ we know not whence he is.”

Others of the Jews stifled conviction. “ This man doth many miracles : but if we let him alone, the Romans will come and take away our place and nation.” Or, *because of the Pharisees, did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.* How many do likewise ; and are led by some worldly reasons to resist the impression of their conscience ! They engross themselves in continual cares : never leave their minds unoccupied ; feel an inward sense that all is not right, yet do not live as disciples of Christ, because of the habits to which they are attached, the companions or the pleasures which they do not choose to resign.

And shall it be said, that God is unrighteous, if

he leaves such hearts in their barren lifeless state, and that in calling them to account hereafter, he is as one who seeks to reap where he has not sown? The truth is, that men “WILL NOT come unto Him, that they might have life.” How often would he have gathered his children together, “even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and they WOULD NOT!”¹

They WOULD NOT : and have left us a warning “lest there be in any an evil heart of unbelief,” so as to “receive the grace of God in vain.” Rather “seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;” and *walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.*

LECTURE LXV.

CHRIST REPRESENTS HIMSELF AS SENT
BY THE FATHER, TO BE THE LIGHT OF
THE WORLD.

JOHN xii. 44—50.

44. *Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.*

45. *And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.*

¹ Matt. xxiii. 37.

Our Lord repeats here, what he had often affirmed before, that what we know of the Father, we know of him through the Son. “No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”

It is not so much respecting the nature or the majesty of God that he speaks, as respecting his will and counsels. And this is what concerns us. In regard to the being and majesty of God, what Job has expressed will be always true: “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?” But in regard to the will of God towards man, that is revealed to us in the gospel; and whoever *sees* by faith,—that is, *believes in*—Jesus Christ, sees God, whose will he represents, whose counsels he discloses. So in what follows.

46. *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.*

47. *And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.*

48. *He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*

49. *For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.*

50. *And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.*

The terms here used are well worth our considering. *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.* This clearly implies, that without him, men are in darkness; and it is a just description. Consider what it is to be in darkness. Our Lord himself describes it: "If any man walketh in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." He stumbleth; or he wanders out of the way altogether, and in the end finds that he has wearied himself in vain, that his whole course has been mistaken. Such was the case with the heathen. They worshipped as God they knew not what; and turned the glory of the Creator into the image of weak and sinful man. Such was the case with the Jews, though in a different way of error: they trusted that they were "Abraham's children," that they had the favour of Abraham's God; and knew not that many should come from the east and the west, the north and the south, and sit down with Abraham in the kingdom of God, while the children of the kingdom should be thrust out. Such is the case with too many in every age, who think themselves "light," and "walking in the light," when in truth they are in the broad road which leadeth to destruction. They have risen early, and late taken rest, and eaten the bread of carefulness, and find, too late,

that they have spent their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not. At the close of their earthly life, they have secured to themselves wealth, which cannot purchase heaven; have received the “praise of men,” but now want “the honour which cometh from God;” have enjoyed pleasures, which have only proved them to be “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;” have indulged sins, which have shown that they were not “children of light,” but “of darkness.”

Meanwhile our Lord has said, *I am come a light into the world.* If so, there will be a manifest difference between those who are following that light, and those who abide in darkness. No less difference than between the blind man and the man who sees; between one who travels in the darkness of the night, and another whose course is guided by the light of day, and who neither stumbleth nor wandereth, “because he seeth the light of this world.”

Consider what that difference will be.

The man will know the end of his journey, and the destination to which he is bound, and the way in which he must walk to reach that end. He has inquired within himself, “Wherewith shall I appear before the Lord?” And here *the light* comes in to his assistance, and displays to him our “Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who hath made propitiation for our sins.”

By this light he is guided in his whole progress: he does not look on it as an object to be gazed at, and admired, and then left and forgotten: but he keeps his eyes steadily upon what he has seen, and proceeds, “looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of his faith:” looking to him for instruction, for guidance, for help, for support, for victory. He is the Christian’s light, the Christian’s sun: as evident to his mind, as the sun in the heavens to the bodily eye. He was so represented in the words of prophecy, saying, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”¹ And St. Paul describes the fulfilment of the prophecy:² “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,” who said at the beginning, “Let there be light, and there was light,” “hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Here, then, is an easy test for self-inquiry. Is he such to you? Do you look up to him as your light, your sun: who rouses you from sleep, that sleep of the soul, in which too many live and die; who enables you to discover your course on earth; who conducts you to God; who points out your path; who directs your steps; who animates your heart; who enlivens all your ways.

¹ Is. lx. 1.² 2 Cor. iv. 6.

If that is not the case, it would be vain to deny that you are *abiding in darkness*. It would be worse than vain ; for such error would hinder you, as it hindered the Pharisees of old, from coming to him who is able to disperse the mist from before your eyes ; and if persisted in, must issue in the “blackness of darkness” for ever. *The commandment which the Father gave, what Jesus should say and what he should speak, that commandment is life everlasting.* But it is also everlasting death to those who reject it. *For he that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him. the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*

LECTURE LXVI.

THE LORD SHOWS BY A FIGURATIVE ACTION, THE NECESSITY OF BEING CLEANS-ED BY HIS BLOOD.

JOHN xiii. 1—11.

1. *Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his*

own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.

2. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him ;

3. Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God ;

4. He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments ; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

This is a remarkable transaction, in regard to the meaning it conveyed. But our different manners make it appear remarkable in respect to that part of it which had nothing really singular. The bathing the feet of those who came as guests, was with the Jews and other people of the east a customary thing. Jesus mentions it as an attention which he had reason to expect, though he did not receive it, from Simon the Pharisee, by whom he was entertained. (Luke vii. 44.) He says, "Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head."

The action itself, therefore, had nothing singular. The wonder was, that *he* should do it: that he who ought to have been "ministered unto," should

undertake to minister: that he should “gird himself, and come forth and serve them” who called him Master and Lord. And when Peter remonstrated, the answer given to him shows that it is not even the humble and condescending character of the transaction, but its figurative nature, which was our Lord’s chief object, and which we are bound in the first place to consider.

6. *Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?*

7. *Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*

8. *Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*

9. *Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.*

10. *Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.*

11. *For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.*

We perceive at once that there is a meaning here beyond the mere circumstance to which the words related. *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.* Jesus could not mean, that unless he performed this servant’s office for Simon, Simon could have no part with him; neither, if this were the purport of his words, was it one which could not be now explained, but he *should know hereaf-*

ter. That part of it from which he was to learn a lesson of humility, was, in fact, explained immediately : *whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.*

But the principal object of this transaction could not be explained, till the blood had been really shed, which was soon about to flow, and to open “ a fountain for sin and for all uncleanness.”¹ “ The blood of Christ,” we know, “ cleanseth from all sin.” This was prefigured under the law, as St. Paul expressly shows, by the use of blood in the service of the sanctuary. (Heb. ix. 21, and 13, 14.) “ Moses sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood ; and without shedding of blood is no remission. If then the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh : how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ?”

This then was the meaning of our Lord in what he said to Peter : *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.* Sin attaches to thy nature ;—for “ that which is born of the flesh, is flesh ;”—sin attaches to thy conscience ; for “ what man is he that liveth and sinneth not ? ” But thou mayest be

¹ Zech. xiii. 1.

“washed, be sanctified, be justified,” by the blood of the everlasting covenant,² in which God has promised remission of sin to the disciples of his beloved Son. Here thou mayest wash and be clean. But *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*

The apostle now perceived his Master's purpose, and eagerly claims his offer. *Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.* Utterly corrupt by nature, I need to be completely cleansed. The Lord replies, *He that is washed,* (has been washed,) *needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.* Here another truth is conveyed under a figure. One who has used the bath, as was their constant custom, needs not to bathe again; but returning home, or visiting the house of a distant friend, he might accept that ordinary hospitality which Simon did not offer, and *wash his feet* on entering in. This answers to the state of the soul which is in covenant with Christ. As the body is purified by bathing, the soul is purified by his blood: and they who have sought this fountain, and made it theirs by faith, may be compared to those who have already used the bath, and *are clean every whit.* So, says our Lord, ye, my apostles, who have believed in me, are clean: and “if ye continue in my word,” ye need no other purification. The evil that is in the world will still defile the nature which is too liable to be defiled: but the same blood will cleanse, applied by habi-

² 1 Cor. vi. 11. 1 Pet. i. 19.

tual repentance. Still “ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified.” *Ye are clean ;—but not all.*

Not all. Judas had no part in that acceptance, which had been granted to the other apostles. Outwardly washed, he had enjoyed the same privileges and been partaker of the same cleansing : but he had never been really washed, or sanctified, or justified, because his heart had never really applied itself to the Redeemer. It was not that he had once been in a justified state, accepted before God, and was now about to forfeit the favour which he had enjoyed. He had never been accepted by him who sees the heart, and knew the ineffectual, unsubstantial nature of the faith which he professed in Jesus. *Therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.*

How is it with ourselves? We have all one Lord, one creed, one baptism. Have all the same heart? a heart which has been sprinkled with that blood, which “cleanseth from all sin?” For observe how clearly it is shown here, that no one has any part in “the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,” unless he have been “washed in the blood of the Lamb,” and is purified by his Spirit from the corruption of nature, and the pollution of sin. *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*

LECTURE LXVII.

THE APOSTLES ARE EXHORTED TO MUTUAL CONDESCENSION; AND WARNED, THAT THERE IS A TRAITOR AMONG THEM.

JOHN xiii. 12—30.

12. *So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?*

13. *Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.*

14. *If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.*

15. *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*

16. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord: neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.*

17. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

We are here instructed in another, though secondary, object of this transaction. It was to remain as a perpetual lesson of humility and condescension. This too is particularly insisted on. *Know ye what I have done to you? Ye venerate*

me, and ye have reason, as your *Master and Lord* : as having a far higher superiority above you, than any one of my disciples can ever have above his brethren. *If I then, your Lord and Master, have done towards you what is properly a servant's office, I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.* The disciples of Christ are called to many acts of self-denial, many duties which may seem humiliating and degrading. The abodes of poverty, of disease, and sometimes of vice and wretchedness, must be visited. This requires self-denial : it is painful in itself : and it often excites the scorn of others, who are strangers to the constraining motive. So likewise they must reprove those who "hate to be reformed," and instruct those who are deaf to instruction, and exhort those upon whom exhortation is thrown away. For this they need encouragement. Their Lord and Master has given them an example : and *the servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.* How often has this consideration excited the Christian to works of charity, and supported him in scenes of humiliation, to which nothing except the love of Christ and the example of Christ would have constrained him !

The apostles, too, we must observe, had need of a lesson of humility. It does not appear in St. John's narrative, but it is recorded by the other evangelists, that on this very occasion "there was

a strife among them, which should be accounted greatest.”¹ And the very duties which hereafter they would be called to, were likely to give this course to the corruption of the heart; to be the occasion of rivalry and jealousy. In the earliest period of the church St. Paul was obliged to correct this unchristian spirit. He writes to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. i. 11,) “It hath been declared unto me that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas.” And again, to the Philippians, (Phil. i. 15,) “Some indeed preach Christ of envy, and strife, and contention.” It was an evil which would arise, in part, even from the esteem in which the Christian teachers were held on account of the benefits which they conferred.

Therefore he proceeds, (ii. 3—7,) “Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory: but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” With what force does this exhortation come, when the apostle adds, “Let this mind be in you, *which was also in Christ Jesus*: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant;” nay, took upon him the office of a servant towards the disciples whom he had chosen, and left a standing example to all that should believe

¹ Luke xxii. 24. Matt. xviii. 15—35. Mark ix. 33.

in him through their word, that *they should do as he had done.*

But there are many who neither regard the precept nor the example. Many are “hearers, and not doers of the word: deceiving their own souls.” *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* Nay, even among the twelve, there was one who hearing the words and seeing the works of divine goodness, still remained the slave of sin and Satan.

18. *I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.*²

19. *Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.*

20. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.*

21. *When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.*

22. *Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.*

23. *Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.*

24. *Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.*

25. *He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?*

² See Ps. xli. 9, where David thus speaks of the traitor Ahiathophel. The metaphor is taken from the restive horse or ox which lift their heel against their feeder.

26. *Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop,³ when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.*

27. *And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.*

28. *Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.*

29. *For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast: or, that he should give something to the poor.*

30. *He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.*

God has mercifully provided that we know the steps which led to the treachery of Judas, as well as the crime itself. The steps by which he came to this last bad act, were covetousness and fraud habitually indulged: long practised in despite of all that might have raised his heart from earth to heaven. The occasion was now offered, by which he might still further gratify his ruling passion. "The chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where Jesus were, he should show it, that they might take him." He was now within their reach: and *Satan entered* into the heart of Judas, and instigated him to fulfil his agreement with the chief priests, and claim the "thirty pieces of silver," for which he had covenanted with them.⁴ Thus was the scripture ful-

³ ψωμιον. More properly a slice, or morsel.

⁴ See Matt. xxvi. 14—16. Luke xxii. 22. Luke xi. 24—26.

filled, *He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me.* And thus also is the whole of scripture fulfilled, which teaches us that the heart is deceitful above all things: which warns us to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation; which assures us that our adversary the devil is always on the watch seeking whom he may devour: and that when he finds a heart open and ready for his reception, he enters in and dwells there; and “the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

Truly “the Son of man goeth, as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed.”

LECTURE LXVIII.

THE APOSTLES WARNED OF CHRIST'S REMOVAL, AND EXHORTED TO MUTUAL LOVE.

JOHN xiii. 31—38.

31. *Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.*

32. *If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.*

33. *Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me : and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come ; so now I say to you.*

34. *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

35. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

The time was now close at hand when the disciples of our Lord should be left without the guardian who had hitherto directed them. He prepares their minds for this. *Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.* The glory which he sought in taking man's nature, the glory of "bringing many sons to glory," is now about to be secured by his death upon the cross. The ransom will be soon paid, which shall set free the prisoners of Satan, and exalt his Conqueror to everlasting honour. And so likewise shall *God be glorified in him* : his justice, his holiness, his goodness, will be made manifest to the world.

But the disciples, as he had before said, would "weep and lament." They would seek him to instruct, to direct, to encourage them, and seek him in vain : for *whither he was going*, it was not yet their time to come.

One thing, and only one, would be a bond of strength and consolation ;—mutual love. And this he presses upon them. *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

It appears strange that this should be called *a new commandment*. Moses had enjoined it, in his law : “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” And even perverted as his law had been by the corruptions of the Jewish teachers, they still retained the precept, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour.”

True. They retained the precept : but they did not observe the practice. Self-importance, self-love, self-interest prevailed over it : and there wanted a sufficient motive to overcome these selfish feelings. St. Paul could reflect upon his past life as a Pharisee, and say that he had “lived according to all the commandments of the law blameless.” But he is conscious of the change which had taken place in his feelings towards other men, since he had become a disciple of Christ. From the ground on which he was then standing he looks back upon his former state, the way he had passed over, and says, “We ourselves also were some time foolish and disobedient, *living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.*”¹ How different such a temper, from that strong and warm affection which breathes in his epistles : and which did not express itself more in words than in actions ; making him “all things to all men,”² if by any means he might save some ; and disposing him to sacrifice every interest and inclination to the welfare of his Christian disciples.

¹ Titus iii. 3.

² See 1 Cor. iv. 19—22.

Because, though the commandment was not new, the motive to observe it was new, as well as the standard according to which it should be followed. *As I have loved you*: according to the same manner and degree. Here is the measure of love pointed out: here is the manner in which it will be shown. The measure and the manner. Imitation of such love will indeed fall sadly short: but this is the pattern offered us, the pattern by which we are to work: that looking at that which is perfect, we may be satisfied with nothing less: and if we do not reach the mark, may at least advance in the line towards it. *As I have loved you*:—with a disinterested love; with an active love; with a self-denying love:—by love of this nature *shall all men know that ye are my disciples*.

And the commandment so enforced, has not been without effect. If we judge of the apostles themselves as we would judge of other men, we must see that their union, agreement, and mutual co-operation was as great a wonder as any other which attended the first ages of the gospel. And wherever their doctrines were received, love and charity followed in the train. The general kindness and good-will which distinguished the Christian communities was an astonishment to the heathen, who used to say, "See how these Christians love one another!" And in all ages since, the motive here expressed—that *ye love one another as I have loved*

you—has induced those who have been actuated by it, to encounter trials, submit to sacrifices, and use exertions in behalf of others, to which this principle alone could have stimulated them. It is naturally a part of love, to be kindly disposed towards all who are dear to those who are dear to ourselves. And this feeling is here called into exercise. They whom we can help or comfort, they who are in want or tribulation, are dear to him who died for us. And “if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”³

The purport of our Lord in thus addressing his disciples could no longer be concealed from them, slow as they were to comprehend it.

36. *Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.*

37. *Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.*

38. *Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.*

How little men know themselves! how little can it be affirmed beforehand how they will act in untried circumstances, or bear an unexpected temptation!

But that which is impossible with man, is possible with God: and the power of the Holy Spirit

³ See 1 John iv. 11.

gives a strength which nature has not. He who within a few hours of the time when these words were spoken, wanted boldness enough to confess his Lord, even though that confession had no certain danger; he was afterwards prepared to *lay down his life for his sake*, not in word only, but with foreseen and determined purpose. For thus he writes to his fellow Christians: “I must shortly put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me:”—hath showed me when he said, *Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.*

He followed him here, to a cruel death: but he has also followed him to heavenly glory: “receiving the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul.” He was enabled to “rejoice” in being thus called to follow him, “inasmuch as he was made partaker of Christ’s sufferings: that when his glory shall be revealed, he might be glad also with exceeding joy.”⁴

“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator;”⁵ that “whether we live, we may live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we may die unto the Lord: that whether we live or die, we may be the Lord’s.”⁶

⁴ 1 Peter iv. 13.

⁵ Ibid. 19.

⁶ See Rom. xiv. 8.

LECTURE LXIX.

JESUS COMFORTS HIS APOSTLES, DECLARING TO THEM HIS UNION WITH THE FATHER.

JOHN xiv. 1—14.

1. *Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

2. *In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

3. *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

4. *And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*

Our Lord here comforts his disciples, and strengthens them more and more, in preparation for his approaching removal. *Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in me.* Ye have been taught to believe in God, who “in the beginning created all things :” *believe also in me*, as one with the Father ; as having come from God, and now returned to God from whom I came :

returned too, to fulfil the purpose for which I became flesh and have dwelt among you: believe in me, as having *gone to prepare a place for you* in the kingdom of God. If there might not be admittance for you in that kingdom, *I would have told you*. I would not have suffered you to leave all that is valuable upon earth; I would not have suffered you to undergo persecution, and revilings, the scorn of friends and the cruelty of enemies for my sake and the gospel's, if *in my Father's house* there had not been *many mansions*, an abundant reward, an infinite extent of glory.

These expressions are intended to suit the ideas of men. A parent, who was about to leave his children for a while, might cheer them in the same manner. Your heart is naturally troubled, because I am to be separated from you, and ye are left alone: but be of good cheer; I go to prepare another and a happier abode for you, where we shall always be together; and when the time is arrived and all is ready, *I will come again and receive you unto myself*.

So we believe that it will be, according to the description given by the apostle; (1 Thess. iv. 16 :) “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall

we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

And we do comfort ourselves, when trouble is needed; and we deny ourselves, when self-denial is needed; and we govern ourselves by rules which are always needed, trusting to these words.

Here, however, some of the children interpose, and seek for further assurance and information.

5. *Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?*

6. *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

7. *If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

8. *Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*

Thus slowly did the apostles learn to comprehend the whole of Jesus' character. They acknowledged him as a prophet, sent to announce God's will; nay, more, they acknowledged him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. But they scarcely yet perceived him to be the representative of the Father, "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person:" *the way*, by whom alone men have access to the Father: *the truth*, the reality and substance of all those types and shadows under which God had hitherto been partly concealed, and partly mani-

fested: *the life*, who “hath life in himself, and quickeneth whom he will:” who communicates a spiritual power to all who apply themselves to him.

Can we wonder that they were slow to understand this? What do we still often find? May not men long have the Scriptures in their hands, which from the beginning to the end verge towards one point, the history of REDEMPTION:—may they not long be in the habit of hearing discourses, which set forth the way of eternal life:—may they not long be conversant with prayers which are offered in the Saviour’s name: and yet have no knowledge of him, as *the way, the truth, and the life*; no spiritual discernment of that righteousness, which is “unto all and upon all them that believe?” These are spiritual truths, spiritually discerned; and can only penetrate the heart, as the heart is opened by the Spirit of God.

Jesus replies, by declaring the fact, how he was *in the Father and the Father in him*: that whosoever *had seen him, had seen the Father also*. This would be further understood, when he should have ascended to the Father, and the Holy Ghost be more largely shed abroad upon their hearts: “receiving the things of Christ and showing them.”¹

9. *Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he*

¹ John xvi. 14.

that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?

10. *Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*

11. *Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.*

12. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

13. *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

14. *If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

The apostles had already seen great proofs that Jesus was one with God: they might *believe for the works' sake*: the works which they had seen him do. But greater proofs still remained to be hereafter seen: nay, to be done by the apostles themselves; because he was *going to the Father*; because his work of redemption should be finished; because the Holy Ghost should descend, and carry on to their completion the things which had been begun.

We may be surprised to hear of *greater works*, than the making the dumb to speak, the blind to see, the dead to revive. But it is a greater work,

to overcome sin ; to reclaim the wicked from the error of their way ; to lead the spiritually blind into the paths of holiness ; to rouse those who are spiritually dead to the life of righteousness. It was a great work to heal the cripple, as John and Peter did, (Acts iii.) as he “ lay at the gate of the temple.” This they were enabled to do *in the name of Jesus, and asking in his name.* Such was the promise. They believed, and acted upon their belief. Peter said to the man, “ In the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk.” And this name, through faith in his name, made the man strong ; yea, the faith which is by him gave him perfect soundness in the presence of them all. This was a fulfilment of the promise given. But there was a further promise. *Greater works than these shall he do.* This too was accomplished : for it was a greater work, when three thousand of the Jewish assembly, convinced by the words of Peter, “ repented, and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ ;” even of him, whom not two months before they had “ taken, and by wicked hands had crucified and slain.”

Let this encourage all to go forward in the same strength, trusting that they may accomplish the same great work in their own hearts through the like might and power. “ This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” And to him who has achieved this first victory, the final

promise shall be made good: "To him that overcometh, I will give to sit with me on my throne." *I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

LECTURE LXX.

JESUS ENCOURAGES THE APOSTLES WITH
THE PROMISE OF A COMFORTER.

JOHN xiv. 15—17.

15. *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

16. *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*

17. *Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

Words could scarcely have been more plainly spoken, than those in which the distinct persons of the Trinity are here revealed to us in their several offices. Christ, as the Redeemer, *prays the Father*, and he shall send *another*, here described under the title of *the Spirit of Truth*, and of Com-

forter, who shall not, like the Son, appear for a little while, and then be seen no more; but shall abide with the disciples of the Son to the end of the world. In their proper essence, these three characters are revealed as one. But they are also revealed as bearing distinct parts in the work of man's salvation. The Father provides the plan. The Son undertakes the means. The Holy Ghost perfects the work in the soul of man. And the end is, that Christ may be "the author of eternal life to all that obey him." "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable."¹

We are further told, that the presence of the Spirit of truth, the Comforter, is the peculiar privilege of Christ's disciples. Him *the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*

Throughout his discourses here, the Lord distinguishes his disciples from the world, and the world from his disciples. As when he says, "A little while, and *the world* seeth me no more: but ye see me." "*The world* shall rejoice, but ye shall weep and lament." And afterwards,—"*I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me.*" "*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*"

And *the world*, he assures us,—"*the children of*

¹ Ps. cxlv. 3.

this generation," "the children of this world," the lovers of this world, *cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because the world seeth him not, neither knoweth him.* And for an evident reason. It is the heart which receives him : and their hearts are occupied with other things ; are filled with the business, and the cares, and the pleasures, and the pursuits, and the honours of this life, so that they cannot receive the Spirit of truth. The rich young man who inquired of our Lord concerning eternal life ; he could not receive the Spirit of truth : for his heart was full of his "great possessions." The Pharisees could not receive the Spirit of truth ; for their hearts were full of the love of this world's praise. Martha, sister of Lazarus, was in danger of closing her heart against the Holy Spirit, whilst she was "careful and troubled about the many things" of this present time, which "choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." Whilst things visible engross the eye, we cannot have "the evidence of things not seen." Whilst the things cared and hoped for are the things belonging to this world, the heart cannot rise and aspire to him, who is only seen and known by faith.

It is, however, the mark of Christ's disciples, that they do *receive* the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost. The Lord says ; *But ye know him ; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* It is his office to prepare them for that to which they are called : for the service and duties assigned

them here, and for everlasting glory hereafter. And in the performance of this office, he dwelleth with them, first, to instruct them. "He," says the Lord afterwards, "he shall guide you into all truth." "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance." He takes the words, the doctrines, the warnings, the promises of Christ, and shows them to the eyes of the understanding. As St. Paul declares, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."² One and the same Spirit worketh that diversity of gifts and operations, which the people of God exercise in the vocation to which they are called.³

Secondly, the Holy Ghost *dwelleth in them*, to renew and sanctify their hearts. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you."⁴ Thus the Corinthians had become what they were, new creatures, with whom old things had passed away; being "sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."⁵ The apostle reminds them, that their bodies were "the temple of the Holy Ghost, which was in them." For "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."⁶

² 1 Cor. ii. 10.

³ 1 Cor. xii. 8—12. Eph. iii. 5.

⁴ Rom. viii. 9.

⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 11. ⁶ Rom. viii. 9.

Further, the Holy Ghost *is in* the disciples of Christ, to support and uphold them in the time of trial. So St. Paul prays for the Ephesian church, that they may be “strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man.”⁷ In the contemplation of the perils by which he was encompassed, he encourages himself, “knowing that this shall turn to his salvation through the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”⁸ Trusting to his promise, “My grace is sufficient for thee,” he could encounter any danger, and meet any difficulty to which his faith exposed him.

And lastly, the Holy Ghost *is in* the disciples of Christ, to comfort them. It is through him that the promise is fulfilled, “I will not leave you comfortless.” He is especially distinguished as *the Comforter*, who “helpeth our infirmities:” removes our doubts, and calms our fears: “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God:” is “sent forth into our hearts,” that we may “come boldly to the throne of grace,” as children to a father who “spareth his only son that serveth him.”⁹

“What manner of men, therefore, ought we all to be, in all holy conversation and godliness,” that we may not “grieve the Spirit of God,” and provoke him to depart from us. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”¹ In his presence

⁷ Eph. iii. 16.

⁸ Philip. i. 19.

⁹ See Gal. iv. 6.

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 17.

is life, and joy, and righteousness, and peace. And to vex and resist him, by opposing his holy suggestions, is to drive the author of these blessings from our heart, and count ourselves unworthy of eternal life.²

LECTURE LXXI.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS PROMISED TO
THOSE WHO KEEP THE WORDS OF
CHRIST.

JOHN xiv. 18—24.

18. *I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*

19. *Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.*

20. *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*

21. *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

In these words our Lord leaves with his disci-

² See Rom. xiv. 17.

ples a clear and distinct promise of comfort and support peculiar to themselves, and derived to them not through an earthly but a heavenly channel.

Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more. I shall be removed from the sight of the eye, and the hearing of the ear. *But I will come to you : I will not leave you comfortless,*¹ as children who have lost their earthly parent : *because I live, ye shall live also.* Because I live. Though in the sight of men I seem to die, I shall rise again from the grave, and ascend to my Father, and be for ever with him : therefore *ye shall live also,* through the exercise of my power. Your earthly life shall be under my charge ; “ no man shall set on you to hurt you,” except as I see reason to permit it so to be ; and your spiritual life shall be supported by a source which never fails, a source which no man knows, except they who are nourished by it. But ye shall know it ; know its reality and know its origin ; its supply shall be a proof to you that *I am in my Father*, and partake of all his power : and that *ye are in me*, and supported by my union with you.

Is all this a hidden or inward union, of which there is no outward evidence ? There is a visible, and external proof by which those are known to whom the privilege belongs. Men might profess to enjoy or to feel the love of Christ ; as numbers have professed it with their lips, whilst their hearts

¹ ὁρφανους.

were far from him : but there is a test to prove them by ; *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me : and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*

22. Judas² saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

23. Jesus answered and said unto him, *If a man love me, he will keep my words : and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

24. *He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings : and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.*

These words of our Lord could not be easily comprehended by a person not accustomed to turn his thoughts within, and to observe what passes in the heart. So that the apostle Jude inquires how it could be that they should see him, or that he should manifest himself to them, when the world saw him no more.

Jesus does not explain to him *how* this could be, but repeats the assurance ; *I and my Father will love the man that keepeth my words, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*³

In this clear and decisive manner is expressed

² Judas or Jude ; called also Lebbæus, or Thaddeus.

³ The Father and Son : personally distinct, though essentially the same : therefore the plural form is used ; *we will come unto him.*

the spiritual presence of God with his people. This is not unusual in Scripture. He who has made God his portion is said to dwell with God ; as (Ps. xci. 1,) “ He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” And again, God is said to make his abode with those who are his people. (Is. lvii. 15.) “ I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

This is indeed a great promise : but not greater than is fulfilled, sensibly and certainly fulfilled. Its fulfilment is evident in many ways. First, by the gradual departure of those other inmates which ought never to have a place in the heart, but which will surely abide there till the Spirit of God dislodge them ; evil passions, worldly cares and desires. And then, the presence of God will be made manifest by such an habitual state of the soul as nothing else could produce. The disposition of the heart is changed : perhaps, from what it has been formerly ; certainly from what it would be, if God were not dwelling there.

This change is evident, especially, in two particulars. First, an indifference towards worldly things. The affections are set “ on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God ;” and therefore worldly pleasures have little power to interest : worldly advantages are light in the ba-

lance, when weighed against things eternal : it is perceived, that worldly riches may bring danger, as well as purchase enjoyment : and thus they that gain, are enabled to be as though they possessed not ; and they that lose as though they lost not ; and they that are honoured, to regard the honour which cometh from God only ; and they that are lightly esteemed for Christ's sake, to count it their glory. Thus there is plain evidence that he who is not with all men has *come unto them, and is making his abode with them.*

And this is seen, further, in the comfort, and tranquillity, and peace of mind, which they enjoy. As the blessings of life do not unduly transport them, so neither do its trials and sorrows overwhelm them. Exactly at the time when it is needed, God makes his presence known, and cheers their hearts, as the sun cheers the earth, with a genial ray of warmth and comfort which nothing can either exclude or imitate. So that the Christian can sometimes say, that the “bed of languishing” has been dearer to him than the bed of health : the days of privation sweeter than the days of possession ; the season of sorrow more worthy to be remembered than the season of rejoicing ; because he has enjoyed the presence of God in a higher measure and a more perceptible manner. In the multitude of sorrows which he had in his heart, that comfort has refreshed his soul. As the hiding of God's face, the want of

spiritual light can turn the brightest earthly scene to gloom and darkness; so the manifestation of his Spirit in the soul can enliven the house of mourning, and clothe the distressed heart with the “garment of praise.”

Is this blessing desirable, so that nothing else can be compared with it? See then the way, the only way, in which it may be obtained, and cherished, and secured. *Jesus said, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

LECTURE LXXII.

THE APOSTLES ARE CONSOLED, IN THE PROSPECT OF CHRIST'S DEPARTURE, BY THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY GHOST AND INWARD PEACE.

JOHN xiv. 25—31.

25. *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.*

26. *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach*

you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The apostles are here taught to look for that divine illumination and assistance which they would so greatly need, both in their condition as men, and in their character as messengers of the Gospel. The things which Jesus *had spoken unto them, being yet present with them*, they could not possibly recall to mind by their own natural powers, so as to proclaim the Gospel revelation through the world. For this He would provide, whose mercy had planned the whole. The Father would *send the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, and he should teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance*. He should teach them to apply to their own hearts the instruction and consolation which Christ had given: and he should teach them to convey the same to others. They could not have spoken at all, or certainly we could have derived no satisfaction from their words, if we were not assured that they “spoke not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but that which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”¹

Nor must it ever be forgotten, that the same “unction from the Holy One” is needful alike to those who receive the Gospel, as to those who teach it. Paul spoke, and disclosed the words of scripture: (Acts xvi. 14:) but “the Lord opened the heart,” that it should “attend unto the things which were

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 13.

spoken of Paul." Truth shines in a dark place, till the eyes of the understanding are enlightened to perceive it. "Paul planteth, and Apollos watereth: but it is God which giveth the increase."² "The preparations of the heart are from the Lord."

Still further proof of this is seen in what follows.

27. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

28. *Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.*

29. *And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.*

30. *Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*

31. *But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.*

Good reason had our Lord to say, that the disciples, *if they loved him*, if their love had its proper exercise, would *rejoice* that he was now returning to his Father: when both he himself would be in possession of his own glory, and when he would be able to succour those who believed in him with all his Father's power. Now, *the prince of this world* prevailed, who *hath nothing in Christ*: no-

² See 1 Cor. iii. 6.

³ Prov. xvi. 1.

thing in common with him, no concern, no interest in him. But as he warned the disciples beforehand of all that should come to pass, and by that prophecy confirmed the faith which would otherwise be shaken by his death: so would he also secure to them a comfort which should supply all their need. *Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.*

It might seem a vain promise. We remember the warning which he himself had uttered, “They shall put you out of the synagogue. Yea, the time cometh, when whosoever killeth you, shall think that he doeth God service.” “They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake.”⁴

Is it not strange, then, that he should say to persons whom he forewarned to expect circumstances like these, *Peace I leave with you?* When we speak of peace as any man’s lot, we think of an easy tranquil course of life; of the promise of outward comforts; of the security of a quiet home; of the sweets of domestic affection. But none of these were ever to belong to the apostles.

There must be, then, a sort of peace which is independent of these things, independent of outward circumstances: not always accompanying

⁴ Luke xxi. 12.

them when favourable; not always disturbed by them when they are adverse.

Certainly there is a peace which this world can neither give nor take away: and which he alone can bestow, who has access to the soul, who can reach and rule the heart. How little can outward comforts effect, when the mind is disturbed, perplexed, and ill at ease! Offer all that *the world giveth* to the man who has lost what in the world he most valued—his fortune, or his child, or the wife of his bosom—what can it do for him? Does it restore to him peace?

Yet there is something which can give peace, even in an hour like that: the same which gave comfort to the apostles under persecution and affliction. It is that whisper of God's favour and mercy and lovingkindness, which the Holy Spirit pours into the heart, and calms its worldly anxieties and sorrows, as when oil is poured upon the troubled waves. Supported by this, while the chief-priests and the elders "were filled with indignation," and "cut to the heart," in all the misery of alarm and hatred and malice, the apostles calmly "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ."⁵ Supported by this, the hearts of Paul and Silas enjoyed a tranquillity which might well be envied by their persecutors, though many stripes were

⁵ Acts v. 41.

laid on them, and they were thrust into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks. (Acts xvi. 25.) “At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God.”

This was to have peace ; this was to experience the fulfilment of that promise, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.*

Who can read this promise, and witness its accomplishment, as it may be daily witnessed, without an earnest desire that the like peace may be attained and possessed by themselves?

It is offered them, it may belong to them. The invitation is clear and universal. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; and YE SHALL FIND REST UNTO YOUR SOULS. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

LECTURE LXXIII.

CHRIST REPRESENTS HIMSELF UNDER THE
FIGURE OF A VINE.

JOHN XV. 1, 2.

1. *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

2. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

A natural image is here used, to explain a mysterious truth, by comparing it with what is more familiar. It is a mysterious truth, that the disciples of Christ should derive their spiritual existence and nourishment from him: that he should dwell in them; that they should be one with him, and he with them. But there is a fact in nature to which it may be compared; the dependance of a branch upon its stem: especially when a branch is taken from its parent tree, and grafted into the stock of another, and becomes one with that other, and receives its nourishment and vigour from it.

Our Lord seizes upon this image: led, perhaps to do so, because he and his disciples might be seated together under the shelter of a vine, or because many might be flourishing around them. And he makes use of the example, to show what he was to the disciples, and the disciples to him, and the Father to both. *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

The business of the husbandman, is to plant the vine, and dress and tend it. He first places the tree in the spot where he designs that it should grow; and afterwards he continues to watch the branches, and treats them as they require. Some he prunes, and some he takes away.

The first work, the planting of the vine, God had now performed. The soil had been long preparing, under the cultivation of the law and the prophets: and now the tree was set in the ground, planted in Judea, whose branches should extend into all lands, and whose "leaves should be for the healing of the nations."

Let all contemplate it as a "tree of life," growing within their reach, and in their own country; and having in itself the blessing of everlasting happiness. For such is *the true vine*, which the love of the heavenly husbandman has provided for the world.

Observe now the husbandman's treatment of the branches of this vine. *Every branch in me that*

beareth not fruit he taketh away. This is the Father's purpose, that they who belong to Christ, should bear the fruit of "love, and joy, and peace, and long-suffering, and gentleness, and goodness, and meekness, and temperance." And if they bear them not, the purpose of the husbandman is disappointed, and such an unfruitful branch is set aside as useless, and left to wither. Perhaps it may be retained for a while; that takes place, which is spoken concerning the barren fig tree:¹ the husbandman "digs about it, and dungs it: and if it bear fruit, well:" and if not, it is at last cut down, and allowed to "cumber the ground" no longer. Should any who profess to be united with Christ as the true vine, either be producing evil fruit, or not producing any fruit at all, that very barrenness is a proof that they no longer make part of the vine; they receive no nourishment from the stem: "whoso abideth in Christ, and Christ in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." But every branch "which beareth not fruit, is rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."²

We turn now to the branches which are of a different sort: and what is said of them deserves our best attention. *Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

¹ Luke xiii, 8.² Heb. vi. 8.

This still describes the work of the husbandman.

The branch on which he bestows his care and labour, is the bearing branch. And this he diligently prunes: removes useless shoots and leaves, clears away whatever is likely to injure the produce: employs his knife, sometimes to appearance roughly, but in truth discreetly, and to a wise end. Such is also the care of our heavenly Father over the branch in Christ which beareth fruit. *He purgeth³ it, that it may bring forth more fruit.* And various are the means employed by him. He tries his people in different ways; sometimes it might seem severely, but ever with a merciful design. How little could it be discerned by their outward condition in this life, who those are whom God really regards with most favour! Often they are rather distinguished by their pre-eminence in affliction. Illness preys upon their strength; cuts short their active usefulness. They suffer under some painful and lingering disease. Their nearest and dearest connexions are in distress, or are taken from their side, and every source of earthly enjoyment is taken with them.

This may be sometimes a chastisement, especially if the blessings of a more prosperous course have not been rightly used: if they have made the Christian careless, instead of thankful; luxurious or covetous, instead of temperate and liberal; indolent and self-indulgent, and not “zealous of

³ καθαيري. Cleanses, or clears, by pruning.

good works." In such case, if God does not cast him forth as a withered branch altogether, he will purge him with the knife of adversity; he will cut off "the desire of his eyes," which has been desired more than the Author of every good: will take away his earthly treasure, which he is preferring to treasure in heaven.

But afflictions are not always chastisements. We do not read that Job, in his prosperity, was either proud, or sensual, or uncharitable: we know the contrary; yet he was sorely tried. And there is a reason; because "tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."⁴ It strengthens the character, completes the qualities, and realizes the graces of the Christian. Therefore, said St. Paul, "we joy in tribulation also;" we joy in it, not because in itself it is delightful, but because we know it is sent for a good end, that we may bear more fruit, and receive a greater reward. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

How great the comfort, when we can thus regard our present life! Altogether as a state of preparation in which our Father, as a husbandman, places us, and watches and tends our progress, whether towards good or evil. How precious in his eyes must that plant be, which he cul-

⁴ Rom. v. 3, 4.

tivates with so much care ! What great things must be laid up for those who answer the culture which he bestows on them ! And what a blessing, to be assured that “ all things shall work together for good to them that love God, who are called according to his purpose,”⁵ first to be grafted upon Christ, the true vine, and then to bear “ fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life ! ”⁶

This world, and our passage through it, wears a new aspect as soon as it is thus contemplated. Let us learn more and more to consider it in this view. Such faith will render blessings doubly blessed, because it will sanctify them. Such faith will render afflictions not only tolerable, but easy. We shall be able to say, It is my Father's hand. “ Let him do what seemeth him good ; ” herein is the Father glorified, that we bear much fruit : and he is enabling me to bear more fruit. Nay, he is rewarding the little fruit of holiness which I have yet rendered him, by giving me more means and opportunities of serving him, and conforming to his will.

While we encourage thoughts like these, we shall derive fresh sufficiency from him, to whose body we belong. The strength of a branch is not derived from itself, but from the virtue of the

⁵ Rom. viii. 28.

⁶ Rom. vi. 22.

parent stem. And so the Christian, weak in himself, is strong in the strength of Christ: he can do all things, bear all things, hope all things, suffer all things, “through Christ who strengtheneth him.”

LECTURE LXXIV.

THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST REPRESENTED AS BRANCHES OF THE VINE.

JOHN XV. 3—8.

3. *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

4. *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

5. *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

Our Lord here pursues the example which he had begun, when he described himself as the vine, and his disciples as the branches of the vine. He

had shown how the husbandman *purgeth* the promising branch ; clears it from what might impair its fruitfulness. *Ye*, he proceeds to say, are already "*clean*,"¹ "*purged from your old sins,*" *through the word which I have spoken to you.* And now what remains is this ; that ye *abide in me, and I in you.* On this all depends. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

Here he speaks of the apostles as being already branches of the true vine. Let us consider how they had become so.

The branches of a tree are connected with it and belong to it in two ways. Either they spring naturally from it, and grow out of it ; or they are grafted into a stem to which they had not before belonged. The apostles did not naturally belong to the stock of Christ : for he is of God, and they were of the race of Adam. It is the same with all Christians. None are made branches of the true vine by birth or origin. We are expressly assured that they who do become such, "*are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" They are taken from their wild stock, the stock of Adam, and grafted upon the true vine, the tree of life, the tree of fruitfulness. The Father, who *is the husbandman*, by his Spirit takes the soul from the stock to which it belonged by nature, a corrupt

¹ The words *purgeth* and *clean* are similar in the original.

tree which cannot bring forth good fruit; and grafts it upon the stock of Christ, which gives it another and a better nature, and enables it to bear the fruit of righteousness and holiness. So in the case of Peter, when he replied to the question of his Lord, “Whom say ye that I am? Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”² It is distinctly affirmed, that “flesh and blood had not revealed this to him, but the Father which is in heaven.” And so, (Acts xvi. 14,) when a certain woman, named Lydia, believed, and was baptized into the faith of Christ; we are also assured, that the Lord opened her heart, “that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.”

These instances may also instruct us as to the manner of the union. When a scion is united to a tree, means must be used to connect the one with the other. And so in this spiritual husbandry. That which is used by the Spirit of God, that which is needful to unite the man with Christ, is faith. Baptism is the outward form by which the union is signified and shown: and faith is the inward principle of adherence. It was faith which the apostle Philip required of the Ethiopian, whom he had instructed in the truths of the Gospel. When the stranger said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”³ Why may I not be grafted into

² Matt. xvi. 16, 17.

³ Acts viii. 36.

the vine which thou hast been displaying to me? Philip replies: "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God." And he baptized him.

It is thus that faith acts, and connects the young and tender scion with the parent stem: acts in uniting the soul with Christ. The disciple believes within himself, or in the case of infant baptism, the parent believes in his behalf, that it is good for him to be united with Christ Jesus. For the stock to which he belongs by birth, is a corrupted stock, condemned before God, producing evil fruit; and the end of such trees is to be burned: "every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire." But the branches which are grafted into Christ, do not perish; they bring forth the fruits of the Spirit here on earth, and hereafter God removes them and transplants them into his heavenly kingdom. This the man believes: the apostles believed it: the Ethiopian believed it: and therefore they desired to be separated from their naturally bad and perishing stock, and to be engrafted as willing scions upon the stem of Christ, who is the true vine.

Let all remember, that the substance of these thoughts must pass through every mind, and form the ground of union with the Redeemer. "In Adam all die," and therefore all must clear and separate themselves from his race, or they too must

die. But “there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” “Whoever liveth and believeth in him, shall never die.” Every soul, therefore, must be a branch grafted into him, that it may live and flourish for ever in his vineyard. Such is the faith which must be active in the heart, and make it adhere closely to the stem, and manifest both its union and its vigour by the goodness and abundance of the fruit it bears.

For we learn from what follows, first, that all fruitfulness depends on this adherence; and next, that all proof of adherence must be sought from fruitfulness.

6. *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered: and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

8. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples.*

The intention of the husbandman, who grafts a new scion upon a stem, is that it should bear fruit. The intention of God in sending Jesus Christ into the world is the same. He sent him to bless men, in turning them away from their iniquities. His Spirit unites the soul to Christ, that it may be changed, and purified, and renewed. And the effect of that union is to supersede the original na-

ture, the carnal mind, which is death, and to produce “a new heart, and a right spirit,” which shall exhibit the fruits of temperance, and goodness, and meekness, and brotherly kindness, and godliness, and purity. *Herein is the Father glorified.* For this purpose were they grafted in, that they might bear these fruits. *So are they Christ’s disciples.* But if they *bear them not*, they *abide not in him*. The proof of the branch belonging to the tree, is its bearing fruit of the same nature as the tree. “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” The qualities of the parent stem must be the qualities of the branch too. Can a heart be grafted on the stock of Christ, who himself so loved the world, that he laid down his life to redeem it; and that heart bear no brotherly kindness, no charity? Can a heart be grafted on the stock of Christ, who set such an example of long-suffering, of gentleness, of meekness, and yet bear no fruit of a like kind? Is it not patient under injuries, nor gentle, nor meek, nor lowly? Can a heart be grafted into the stock of Christ, whose whole life was one course of self-denial, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, who “had not where to lay his head:” and has that heart no self-command, no moderation? Is it not temperate in all things? Can it be earthly and sensual?

No further proof is needed, that a man *abides not in Christ*. The faith that seemed to make an union between them, has no firmness, no consis-

tency : it has given way : the stem does not nourish it : and, says the Lord, *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered ; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

But great indeed is the promise to those who “hold the beginning of their confidence stedfast unto the end.”⁴ *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* There is nothing which is expedient for you which shall not be granted. No sorrow shall be without its alleviation. No care without its comfort. No evil passion shall retain dominion. No self-will shall be stronger than the will of God. “For it is God that worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”⁵ They shall be enabled to do “all things :”⁶ yet not they, “but the grace of God that is with them.”⁷ “All things are theirs. For they are Christ’s ; and Christ is God’s.”⁸

⁴ Heb. iii. 14.⁵ Phil. ii. 13.⁶ Phil. iv. 13.⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 10.⁸ 1 Cor. iii. 23.

LECTURE LXXV.

DISCOURSE WITH THE APOSTLES CONTINUED.

JOHN xv. 9—16.

9. *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you ; continue ye in my love.*

10. *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love : even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*

11. *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

12. *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

13. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

Our blessed Lord here places in the strongest light the love which he bore towards his disciples ; for he compares it with the love which the Father bore towards himself. *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.* The principle of union is

the same in both cases; one does the will of the other. The Son *keeps the Father's commandments, and abides in his love.* The disciples are to keep their Lord's commandments, and they shall *continue in his love.* For love, properly considered, is not an abstract principle, but a principle of action. We should try our love to God, by bringing it to the same rule as love to man. If we love a fellow creature, that love produces an instinctive desire of complying with his wishes, of gratifying, pleasing, obeying him. And if there is a real love of Christ in the heart, it will have the same effect. "If ye love me, keep my commandments," is at once the most simple and the most reasonable test on which a judgment can be formed, and the state of the heart decided.

More especially when we proceed to the commandment itself, and consider its justness. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.* What an example of genuine, intense, disinterested love, is set us in the gospel! *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* But St. Paul reminds us, and let it never be forgotten, how much even this unusual love is exceeded by the love of Christ. (Rom. v. 7.) "For scarcely for a righteous man will one *die*: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Died for us whilst enemies, that we might be entitled to be called his friends. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

And here the Lord graciously takes up the term *friends*, as if pleased with it; and rejoices in the opportunity of testifying the confidence which he reposed in them.

15. *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

16. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you; and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

If we look back to the calling of the apostles, the fact here stated appears very clear: *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.* Peter and Andrew were engaged in their vocation, and casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.¹ “And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” So likewise James and John; these also he called: and “they immediately left the ship and their father, and fol-

¹ These had before acknowledged Jesus, on the information of John the Baptist. (See John i. 35—42.) But an interval had elapsed, before they were called to be apostles. Compare Matt. iv. 12—25.

lowed him." So that in every sense it must be allowed that they *had not chosen him*. His call that they should follow him, must have been accompanied by an irresistible influence upon their hearts, which would lead them to love him more than the things of this world in which they had been heretofore engaged, and to seek first the kingdom of God. He had "chosen them out of the world."

This calling of the apostles was peculiar. Ordinary Christians are not in the same evident manner *chosen* out of the world, and *ordained* to the purposes which God designs them to serve. But every one who "has the witness in himself" that he is Christ's disciple, will be forward to confess that he has nothing "which he has not received:" that "by the grace of God" he is what he is: that such grace alone has made him to differ from others who show no evidence of the same faith in the habits of their lives. He is "born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."²

In one point of view, however, it might be said of the apostles that they *had chosen Christ*. They had left all, and followed him. They had said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

And in the same manner, every one who has the hope of eternal life in Christ Jesus, must in

² See the Articles of our Church, x. and xvii.

this sense have chosen him to be theirs. It is the proof that he chooses them to be his. 'They must have perceived his offers and his promises to be exactly what their wants require: must have come to him by the movement of their own hearts: must have adhered to him, and *continued in his love*.

And so likewise, as he ordained the apostles *to go and bring forth fruit*, he ordains all to whom he "gives power to become the sons of God," to live as God's children, and to fulfil the work appointed them, for the benefit of man, and the glory of their heavenly Father. So that their being *chosen*, their "election of God,"³ is not a thing confined to his secret counsels, but has an outward evidence in the life of those who are thus redeemed as "a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Looking, therefore, at these words, and practically applying them, this is the conclusion.

When you "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, and prove your own selves," you ought to be able to say, that Christ has chosen you. For "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."⁴

But the heart may be sad, and afraid to credit this: or the heart may be sanguine, and too ready to be persuaded of it: so that the heart must not be alone trusted, either on one side or the other. Does the conduct of your lives give collateral evi-

³ 1 Thess. i. 4.

⁴ 1 John v. 10.

dence that he hath chosen you, because you have chosen him, and “counted all other things as loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord?”⁵ Are you bringing forth fruit; and engaged in those “good works, which God hath before ordained that you should walk in them?”⁶

This is the evidence, which may “make your calling and election sure,” *that your joy may be full*: this is the proof that the Lord has *chosen you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain*. And “so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”⁷

LECTURE LXXVI.

DISCOURSE WITH THE APOSTLES CONTINUED.

JOHN xv. 17—27.

17. *These things I command you, that ye love one another.*

⁵ Phil. iii. 8.

⁶ Eph. ii. 10.

⁷ 2 Pet. i. 10, 11.

18. *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*

19. *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

20. *Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.*

21. *But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.*

Our Lord had frequently prepared his disciples for enmity and persecution. And here he shows what is the ground of such enmity. He had *chosen them out of the world*: by their preaching and by their practice they would condemn the world: *therefore would the world hate them*. Their example, if presented to kindred hearts, would excite to godly emulation: but proposed to those who were alienated from God and devoted to this present world, it would provoke malice and jealousy. So it has always been. Abel might have kept his sheep in safety, if he had not “offered up to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.”¹ Joseph would have been in no danger from his brethren, if he had consented to partake in their evil deeds.² Micaiah would not have incurred Ahab's enmity,

¹ Heb. xi. 4.

² Gen. xxxvii. 2.

if like his brother prophets he had concealed the truth, and prophesied "peace, when there was no peace," to that wicked king.³

An example of righteousness in the midst of unrighteousness, as of Lot among the inhabitants of Sodom, stirs up the pride of the human heart, and leads on to malice and hatred. We see its working in the complaint of the Pharisees against our Lord: "Master, so saying, thou condemnest us also." On the same principle, men argue with themselves—if such and such practices of piety and habits of self-denial proceed from a knowledge of "the truth as it is in Jesus," and we do not pursue such practices,—we do not rightly hold the knowledge of the truth. So to act is to condemn us also. Thus the heart reasons with itself: and this is the secret spring of that jealousy which exists against a stricter life, and a more careful course than the generality of a Christian community approve or follow. It is a very favourable sign when that jealousy is not felt or not indulged. We find honourable mention made of the Bereans, (Acts xvii. 11,) compared with the people of Thessalonica; for the Bereans, instead of violently opposing the new doctrine preached to them by the apostles, "searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so." And "therefore," we are told, "many of them believed." Their "honest

³ 1 Kings xxii. 8—28.

and good heart" was favoured, and enlightened more and more.

The sin of the Jewish nation was that they showed a very different spirit. They loved darkness for the sake of darkness. It better suited their habits of iniquity. And this was the great aggravation of their sinfulness. So that Jesus adds;

22. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin.*

23. *He that hateth me hateth my Father also.*

24. *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.*

25. *But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.*

26. *But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:*

27. *And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*

The apostles might naturally have been discouraged by the tenour of their Lord's discourse. These last words would cheer and refresh them, by promising a time when all should not dishonour him, and there should be some better return

of his labour and theirs, than contempt and hatred. *When the Comforter is come, he shall testify of me.* It was a supernatural work to change the heart, and bring it to love light rather than darkness. The time for this had not yet arrived. As Isaiah had said, "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart: that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them."⁴ But it should not continue so always. *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.*

The Holy Ghost testified of Jesus as the Messiah, when he confirmed the words of the apostles by "signs following;" as in that first miracle, when at the command of Peter, the cripple at the gate of the temple "received strength, and stood, and walked."⁵ But our Lord here alludes to that further testimony which the Spirit should bear within, carrying the truth to the heart, and convincing "the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment." If the testimony of miracles were enough, testimony more than sufficient had been borne already. "The blind had received their sight, the lame had been made to walk, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised."⁶ But as the seal is useless, unless the wax is ready to receive the impression; so was it

⁴ See xii. 40.⁵ Acts iii. 2—8.⁶ See Matt. xi. 5.

whilst the word, and the evidence which proved the word to be of God, fell upon stony hearts, which the Spirit had not softened. This was not to continue so for ever. A promise had been given, and was now to be accomplished. (Heb. viii. 10, 12.) “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

Learn from this, on what the conversion of the heart depends. Naturally, it is averse from God: not indeed averse from him as a provident and beneficent Creator, but as a moral governor: averse from the holiness which he requires. What did the Jews behold in Jesus but purity, mercy, righteousness, godliness? And in this they saw what God is in his own nature, and what man must be if reconciled to him: and therefore they hated him: as he says, *Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.* It is a grievous thought, but confirmed by every thing which we see and know of the world. But *when the Comforter, whom Christ sends from the Father, comes into the heart, he testifies of him* with a force and power which penetrates within. God is no longer the object of enmity and dread, but of love and

devotion: and the heart's desire is not to be separated from him, not to be alienated from him through sin, but to be renewed more and more after his image in righteousness and true holiness. And the constant prayer is; "When wilt thou come unto me? O leave me not, neither forsake me: I will walk in my house with a perfect heart."

LECTURE LXXVII.

THE APOSTLES ARE TAUGHT TO EXPECT
OPPOSITION, AND THE AID OF THE
COMFORTER IS PROMISED THEM.

JOHN xvi. 1—11.

1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.*

2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*

3. *And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.*

4. *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of*

them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

5. *But now I go my way to him that sent me: and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?*

6. *But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.*

The apostles had much reason for sorrow, and the prophecy here uttered was not of a nature to console them, as far as they looked towards the present world. *The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.* As was realized in the instance of St. Paul, who declares, “I verily thought within myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth:”¹ and God, he says, had compassion on him, “because he did it ignorantly.”²

Yet if Saul, and others who thought as he did, that in “persecuting that way unto death,” *they were doing God service*; had these *known the Father*,—understood his real character, or been acquainted with his will, they would not have done these things. And all should be instructed by such an example to distrust their own judgment, to watch vigilantly and pray earnestly, “lest haply they be found to fight against God.”

What then would be the remedy against the sorrow of the apostles? When Jesus here declares,—*Now I go my way to him that sent me*; had they ventured to ask, *Whither goest thou?*

¹ Acts xxvi. 9.

² 1 Tim. i. 13.

the reply would have been their comfort. They would learn, that their Master having ascended up to heaven, could give them stronger support and surer consolation than they had received from him whilst dwelling with him in the world.

7. Nevertheless I tell you the truth : It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

8. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment :

9. Of sin, because they believe not on me ;

10. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more :

11. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

The nature of that comfort is here declared, which was intended for the disciples of Christ. It was the presence of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, which should be enjoyed by them in a far greater measure than had ever been before experienced by the people of God. The prophecy in the Psalms had said concerning Christ, "When he ascended up on high, he received gifts for men."³ And so it would be fulfilled: the king would sit down upon his throne, and then enrich his subjects with his bounty. The presence of the Comforter in their heart would compensate them for the loss of

³ Ps. lxxviii. 18.

their Master's presence in the flesh. And the "mouth and wisdom" which he would give them, should have power to turn many to righteousness: would effect that, which without him⁴ might be attempted in vain.

Let the event explain this.

The Jewish nation had refused to believe in Jesus as their Messiah: had denied that he came from the Father, or would return to the Father: had joined in the work of Satan, *the prince of this world*, and shed his innocent blood.

Fifty days afterwards the promise here made was fulfilled. The fit occasion having arrived, the day of Pentecost, Jesus *sent the Comforter* unto the apostles. They "being filled with the Holy Ghost, began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance."⁵ And Peter undertook to *reprove* the men of Israel. To reprove them *of sin, because they believed not on Jesus*. "Him ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." To reprove them *of righteousness*, because he had ascended to the Father, and so his righteousness had been manifested. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." To reprove them *of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged*. "God had made that same Jesus whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ." Thus Satan was condemned; his

⁴ The personal pronoun is used, *ἐκεῖνος*. *He* will reprove.

⁵ Acts ii. 4—36.

reign broken, his power weakened: and the Lord should sit on the right hand of God, "till he had made his foes his footstool."

Such were the arguments which Peter used. The proofs by which he enforced them, the gift of various languages, were convincing. But not a stronger evidence than Christ had continually given, when the dumb were enabled to speak and the deaf to hear, and the lepers were cleansed, and the dead were raised. Yet when Jesus did these things, the Jews "took counsel to slay him; and "desired the more to kill him, because he had raised Lazarus from the dead." Now, however, when they heard the words of Peter, "they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and unto the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" How shall we save ourselves from the heinousness of this sin?

The apostles, therefore, had now a power present with them, and accompanying their words, which before was not exerted. The Comforter had come unto them, and was *reproving the world* by their mouths; was carrying conviction home. The assembly, their "hearts being opened," the "eyes of their understanding being enlightened," gladly received the words of Peter; "and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

The work performed on the minds of the Jewish assembly must be performed on the minds of all.

That Christ died for sin ; that being raised from the dead, he ascended into heaven ; that he delivers from the power of darkness all who trust in him : this is the sum of Christian faith. But this can no more be received now, than when Peter affirmed it to his countrymen, except through the influence of the same Spirit, proceeding as then from the Father and the Son. We declare the truth, as the husbandman casts the seed into the furrow. And the truth remains unheeded and inoperative, unless the Spirit moves upon the heart ; just as the seed lies unchanged within the ground, if there is no warmth or moisture from above to bring it into life. “The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God.”⁶ The Spirit, however, has continued to accompany the word spoken, and to *reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*. Many, like those who listened to the words of Peter, have “saved themselves from the unto-ward generation” of which they formed a part ; and “walking in the fear of God and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost,” have shown the power which wrought effectually within them.

It is “the same Spirit which worketh all in all.” And we must entreat of him, both for ourselves and others, that he may give us a right judg-

⁶ Art. x.

ment in all things: may enable us to perceive the guilt of our own nature, and to understand “the righteousness which is of God by Jesus Christ:” that being rooted and built up on that foundation, the blessed gifts of the Spirit may be ours, and we may learn by happy experience that “the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”⁷

LECTURE LXXVIII.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PROMISED TO EXPLAIN THE THINGS WHICH THE APOSTLES WERE UNABLE TO COMPREHEND.

JOHN xvi. 12—15.

12. *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

13. *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come.*

There were many things relating to the Gospel which it would be needful for the apostles to

⁷ Rom. xiv. 17.

know, both for their own faith, and that of others. But as yet they *could not bear them*.

Even that great fact which is the basis of all, that the Son of God had come “to give his life a ransom for many;” even that was at present in no wise understood by them. A veil was on their hearts when Isaiah was read, which yet remained untaken away, just “as when Moses was read, a veil was on the hearts”¹ of all the Jews. “He was bruised for our iniquities.” “For the transgression of my people was he stricken.” “Messiah shall be cut off, though not for himself.”² So the prophets had spoken: but light was not yet cast upon these passages, neither was it the divine will that they should be fully understood, till the sacrifice had been already offered, and the atonement completed. Then the Spirit teaching them, they would perceive that he, who they trusted was “to redeem Israel,” did redeem them by that very death which seemed ruin to their hopes. Then the Spirit should *guide them into all truth*, all the truth³ relating to the salvation of man.

To do this was the part of the Spirit in this great work. He did not act independently and alone: *he shall not speak of himself*. Neither did Christ act independently: he had told them in this same discourse, that all things which he had

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 15.

² Is. liii. 5—8. Dan. ix. 26.

³ So the original. *πασαν την ἀληθειαν*.

heard of the Father, he had made known to them :⁴ that the word which they had heard from him, was not his, but the Father's which sent him. So now he adds concerning the Spirit : *whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak*. The whole "three persons together" were united in the same object, and each had his separate office, in conferring upon man a blessing, which too often man despises as if it were beneath his care : nay, never values as he ought, until the same Spirit enlightens him who was to enlighten the apostles. But he, as Jesus proceeds to say,

14. *He shall glorify me ; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

15. *All things that the Father hath are mine : therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.*

Jesus is glorified by the Spirit, because the Spirit teaches men to glorify him. He first teaches the ministers of Christ, as he taught the apostles, to point to the cross of Christ as the means of man's reconciliation with God. And then he teaches those to glorify the Redeemer, who are saved from wrath through him.

It was through the teaching of the Spirit that Peter was enabled to reply to his conscience-stricken countrymen, that the blood which they had shed, might atone for their sin in shedding it.⁵

⁴ John xv. 15.

⁵ See Acts ii. 38, &c.

And thus Christ was glorified. And when three thousand persons gladly received his word, and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; it was the work of the Spirit upon their hearts, which led them as convinced sinners to the “fountain open for sin,” and enabled them to see that they might wash in that and be clean. It was an accomplishment of the words, *He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

When St. Paul explained to the people among whom he ministered “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” he spoke through the teaching of the Holy Ghost. “For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”⁶ Left to himself, he would have persuaded his countrymen to seek “the righteousness which is of the law,” on which he had been used to place his own reliance. Left to himself, he would have remained in the prejudices of his brethren, and have thought it impossible that “God should grant unto the Gentiles also repentance unto life.” But the Spirit *received of Christ, and shewed unto him* the truth: how “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,” had “raised up together” both Jews and Gentiles, and “made them sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”⁷

It is only through the influence of the same Spirit that Christ is now glorified in the salvation

⁶ 1 Cor. ii. 10.

⁷ Eph. ii. 4—6.

of man. It is possible to hear, for years, of the death of Christ : to believe in all the facts of his history : to feel no doubt of the articles of the Christian faith : and yet not to apply these truths to our own case in such a manner as either to be comforted or sanctified. The Spirit must *take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto us* : and make us know “in whom we have believed, and that he is able to keep what we have committed to him unto the great day.” He must make us understand the efficacy of that blood which “cleanseth from all sin,” that we may be led to sprinkle it upon our own hearts by faith. He must teach us the personal interest which we have in Christ, as “an advocate with the Father,” who “ever liveth to make intercession for us.” He must teach us to rely on that grace which is “made perfect in weakness.” It is not of himself that the Christian “can rejoice, as though he rejoiced not ; or weep, as though he wept not ; or buy, as though he possessed not ; or use this world, as not abusing it.”⁸ Only the teaching which is from above, can enable him to say, “Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me : for when I am weak, then am I strong.”⁹ It is not of himself that he can say, “Nay, we glory in tribulations also ; for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”¹

⁸ 1 Cor. vii. 30.⁹ 2 Cor. xii. 10.¹ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

These *things of the Father* the Spirit *takes and shews* unto them that believe ; and thus bestows that peace and consolation, which the gospel uniformly promises as the effect of faith. For “the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Do we desire more of this? The water of life must be sought from the fountain of life : and if we need larger supplies, we must drink deeper of the spring. The treasures of grace must be received from him in whom all riches are laid up and all fulness dwells. And to dispense these, is the Spirit’s office : for Jesus has expressly declared, *he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you.*

LECTURE LXXIX.

JESUS FORETELLS HIS APPROACHING REMOVAL TO THE APOSTLES.

JOHN xvi. 16—27.

16. *A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.*

17. *Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while,*

and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

18. *They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.*

19. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?*

20. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*

21. *A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.*

22. *And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*

St. John has himself told us in his own simple language how these words were fulfilled a few days after they had been spoken.¹ “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” Meanwhile they would *weep and lament*, as well they might, at the indignities which he should suffer. It would seem as if all their hopes were at an end: whilst *the world*, the enemies of Christ, would *rejoice* as if they had gained a victory. But after a short though heavy storm, the sun would again break forth, and the joy be proportioned to the sorrow. They would not only see him, but see his glory, his

¹ ch. xx. 20.

greatness : it would be joy such as no man could take away from them : the joy of knowing that they had not followed a shadow, or given up this present world for nothing ; but that one was gone before “ to prepare a place for them,” and meanwhile to support them in their duties ; to “ establish, strengthen, settle them.”

There is much in this which is applicable to all Christians. They are often called to weep and lament while the world rejoices : they weep over their manifold infirmities, their “ secret faults,” their “ presumptuous sins ;” they weep over the careless lives of the multitude, who go along the broad road which leadeth to destruction. They are serious in their deportment, and in their habits self-denying, whilst they are “ working out their salvation with fear and trembling.” Meanwhile the world rejoices ; drowns thought in senseless mirth ; and lays up no good foundation against the time to come. But still the Christian has even now *a joy which no man taketh from him* : a joy in knowing whose he is, and whom he serves. And he whom he serves, and he whose he is, does not leave him comfortless : *sees him again*, here by the refreshing presence of the Spirit, and will see him again hereafter, when he comes in clouds and great glory, to receive his faithful followers into the joy of their Lord. Whatever labour he may have undergone, or sorrow he may have endured on earth, he will then *remember no more* ; it will *be turned into joy*.

Looking onward now to his approaching ascension into heaven, Jesus proceeds to say ;

23. *And in that day ye shall ask me nothing.² Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*

24. *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name : ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

25. *These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs : but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.*

26. *At that day ye shall ask in my name : and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you :*

27. *For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God.*

Jesus had not yet become the Intercessor who is set down on the right hand of the majesty on high, to be our “ Advocate with the Father.” Neither had the disciples yet clearly understood, that the way of access to the Father is by the Son : for all things had been delivered unto him by the Fa-

² ἐρωτησέτε. Shall have no need to ask such questions as they had been lately asking, and were anxious to inquire about still further : as, whither he was going ; what he meant in saying, “ A little while, and ye shall see me : and again a little while, and ye shall not see me.” All things which they might desire or need to know, should be revealed to them.

And then follows a further promise : all things which they might desire or need to have, should be granted them. Whatsoever ye shall ask (αἰτήσητε) the Father in my name, he will give it you.

ther. Therefore hitherto they had asked nothing in his name. All would be soon plainly revealed: no longer *spoken in proverbs*: and they would be taught the privilege which should belong to them as children: how they might say, “Abba, Father,” having “received the Spirit of adoption.”³ Still more boldly might they come to the throne of grace, knowing that he, their Lord and Master, was “ever living there to make intercession for them.” And yet, it appears, he need not plead: so graciously is the love of God declared; *I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.*

Two things are here declared, and both of the highest interest. First, the love of God towards Christ’s disciples. *The Father himself loveth you.* The mercy of God is over all his works: he sendeth his rain both upon the just and upon the unjust: as an earthly parent bears a natural affection toward all his children. But the child of an earthly parent may conduct himself so perversely and disobediently, as to forfeit the parent’s favour: and according to the same example we uniformly learn from Scripture, that the objects of God’s peculiar love are those who do his will. Those who neglect his will, who disobey his precepts, who despise his goodness, he may regard with pity, but he can-

³ See Rom. viii. 15.

not regard with complacency. It is a decided proof of their enmity against him, that they refuse to believe on him whom he hath sent, *who came out from God.*

Further, we learn here the reason of the love of God towards Christ's disciples. It is because of their love towards the Son. *The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from God.*

He is pleased with their crediting his word, and trusting him for what he promises, and "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the pleasures of sin for a season." They have separated themselves from those who "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." And they shall not "lose the things which they have wrought, but receive a full reward."⁴

All therefore whose conscience bears them witness, that they believe in him whom God hath sent, and whose lives bear witness to their faith, that they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; all such may take to themselves this comfort;—*The Father himself loveth you.* They are safe under his buckler; and under the shadow of his wings shall be their refuge, until the enmity of Satan be overpast, and they have entered into that rest, that rest from trial and sin and sorrow, which "remaineth for the people of God."

⁴ 2 John 8.

LECTURE LXXX.

JESUS CONCLUDES HIS DISCOURSE BY A
PROMISE TO THE DISCIPLES OF PEACE
WITHIN.

JOHN XVI. 28—33.

28. *I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.*

29. *His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.*

30. *Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.*

31. *Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?*

32. *Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

The apostles believed that Jesus came forth from God. But it is one thing to believe this, and have no doubt of it in the mind; and another thing so to act upon the belief, as to risk all, resign all, suffer all, in reliance upon that truth.

Such faith is not commonly fixed by a first and sudden impression ; it is more usually the result of a continued influence of the Spirit upon the heart, bringing into captivity the reason, the understanding, the affections. Jesus well knew that the minds of the apostles were not yet in a state to say, with the confidence of Paul afterwards, (Acts xx. 24,) “ None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I may finish my course with joy.” In a few hours they should *be scattered every man to his own*, every one to seek his own safety, and *leave him alone ; and yet*, he adds, *I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*

Thus did he take to himself, as man, that consolation which he has taught his followers to rejoice in. *He was not alone.* And in the trials to which they are called, they too are not alone, because the Father is with them. And as without his presence in the soul, earthly blessings have no abiding good ; so can his presence make ample compensation for the absence of all that this world can bestow. Such is the truth expressed in the next sentence, the last which the Lord addressed to his disciples before his resurrection.

33. *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.*

This might seem a hard saying. *In the world ye shall have tribulation.* Ye shall be carried before princes and governors, and they shall revile, and persecute, and imprison, and torment you:—*but be of good cheer*: maintain your spirits and your courage through all these trials: *I have overcome the world.*

Were they enabled to fulfil this?

We are informed, (Acts v. 40,) that when the high priest, and the Sadducees, and other enemies of the truth, had brought the apostles before the council, “and beaten them, they commanded them that they should not speak in the name of Jesus. And they departed from the presence of the council, *rejoicing* that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”

We are again told, (Acts xvi. 22,) that “the multitude rose up against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: who, having received such a charge, cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas *prayed and sang praises* unto God: and the prisoners heard them.”

Here, then, we find the apostles, in their own persons, leaving us an example and a proof, that he who issued the exhortation, *Be of good cheer*,

could also give the heart to act according to it. We find them placed in circumstances which could not be otherwise than painful to flesh and blood, yet able to rejoice in heart, and rise above their outward trials.

And the principle on which they did this, was a settled, defined principle, as contained in the words of Jesus, *I have overcome the world*. He had set a prospect before them, brighter than the hopes and prospects of this present world, and strong enough to cast its trials and sorrows into shade: so that they were able to glory in tribulation also; “to look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen;” knowing that their “light affliction which is but for a moment, was working for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

But as it is not confined to apostles, in this world to *have tribulation*; so neither is it confined to them to *be of good cheer* and *have peace* in tribulation. The Christian is not exempted from worldly difficulties. It happens to him, as to others, to meet with what are termed misfortunes: to be deprived of the friends which make life dear to him; to be depressed by poverty, to be afflicted by sickness, to suffer under pain. It is not by setting him free from the common lot of human nature, from the punishment which followed the great transgression: it is not thus that God makes

manifest his favour towards him. But he makes it manifest in another way : by cheering him in his poverty, by supporting him in his sickness, by comforting him in his afflictions. As after the deluge he made a covenant with Noah, and set his bow in the sky, for a token, that though there might be clouds and storms, yet there should be a limit to them, and the waters should no more utterly overwhelm the earth : so he treats his servants in their grief ; he shows them the token of his covenant : the sunshine of his mercy breaks through the clouds which overhang them, and they are enabled to say, “ It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.” Then most especially is the promise fulfilled :—“ If any man love me, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Many have experienced the truth of this ; and have avowed, that the time of their heaviest earthly sorrow has been the season of their greatest spiritual comfort. God has so visited and refreshed them, so lightened the darkness of their affliction, so smoothed the pillow of their sickness, that they have forgotten their griefs, and found in his presence the fulness of joy. They have that in themselves which raises them above this world, with all its changes, and reverses, and fears, and sorrows :—even their faith. *In the world they may have tribulation : but still they are of good cheer : for he in whom they believe, has overcome the world.*

LECTURE LXXXI.

THE LAST PRAYER OF CHRIST TO THE FATHER.

JOHN xvii. 1—3.

1. *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come ; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee :*

2. *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

The sublime prayer recorded in this chapter is of a nature to show the greatness of that work, which too many pass over with cold indifference, and which none will ever adequately value on this side the grave.

That work was to be achieved upon the cross, where Jesus should now suffer, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” Here the Son would be glorified, as performing the Father’s will, as receiving the Father’s testimony, as effect-

ing the redemption of the world. And here the Father would be glorified, by this wonderful exhibition of his holiness and his mercy. *Father, glorify thy Son!* Consummate through him the salvation of a perishing world. *That thy Son also may glorify thee*, by showing to sinful man that “thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity:”¹ and that thou so lovedst the world as to give thine only Son, “that all that believe in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Such is “the mystery of godliness:” thus was the Son of man glorified, and thus God is glorified in him. For God had *given him power over all flesh*—all mankind—that he should give eternal life to as many as God had given him.

To as many as God had given him. So those are described, who shall enjoy the benefits of redemption. For as “no man can come to Christ, except it be given him of the Father,”² except “the Father draw him;” those who are so drawn towards him, so permitted to come to him, are given him of God. He had formerly declared, “All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me.” The faith by which they apply to him, is the gift of God to themselves: and the salvation which is the result of their faith, is the gift of God to his Son; “the joy that was set before him,” and for which he “despised the shame:” the satisfaction for the “travail of his soul.”

¹ Heb. i. 13.

² See John vi. 65, and 44.

There is in this much of mystery, which, happily, we need not endeavour to penetrate. Enough is clearly revealed to assure us, that God “has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth :”³ that he “will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”⁴ He will not “break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.” When the sinner is “yet afar off,” he sees him, and invites him to be a partaker of his mercy. “Whoever cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out.” And he has not left us in uncertainty, as to what eternal life depends on, or to whom it belongs. Even if they stood alone, we might learn it from these the latest words of Jesus: *This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

That they might *know thee*. Such was the purpose of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that he might “bring us to God.” Naturally we know him not. Left to nature, we should never know him as he ought to be known. For the real knowledge of God, is not merely such a knowledge as was attained by some of the heathen, as of the Being who framed the world; but an acquaintance with him as Lord, as Governor, as Judge. Such acquaintance as the patriarch Jacob had, when he entered into covenant to serve him: as the patriarch Joseph had, when he refused to disobey him: as the aged Eli had,

³ Ezek. xviii. 32.

⁴ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

when he submitted to his will : as king David had, when he set himself to consider how best he could do him honour. This knowledge men have not naturally. Nay, under every advantage, they are unwilling to acquire it. How far is it from being the natural disposition of the young to seek after God ! How few come readily and willingly to their minister and their teacher, that they may learn “ the wonders of his law,” and neither forget him through ignorance, nor offend him through self-will ! And as age advances, the case is commonly still worse ; evil habits then remove the man still further from God than the carelessness of the child.

There is nothing in this, that can lead to *life eternal*. Those surely must have the knowledge of God, who are to dwell with him through eternity.

Therefore to give them this knowledge, “ God was manifest in the flesh.” *Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent*, brings them to know the true God : to “ the knowledge of him who hath called them to glory and virtue.”⁵ And not only to the knowledge of him in the greatness of his glorious majesty, but in the exercise of his wonderful mercy.

To know him only as “ the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy,” would be a knowledge full of fear and despair, rather than of joy or comfort. But to know him,

⁵ 2 Pet. i. 3.

as we do know him through Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, is a knowledge that gives life. It is to know him, as the God who “dwelleth with them that are poor and of a contrite spirit:” who “forgiveth iniquity, transgression and sin;” and because he can in no wise “clear the guilty,” has “found a ransom” which man could never find, and now “commandeth all men every where to repent,” and “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” And thus to *know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, is eternal life*. Such knowledge is as a seed planted in the heart, which springs up unto everlasting life. It leads to the love of God, who has first loved us: it leads to obedience to his will, which has been so firmly sanctioned; it leads to an union with him, an habitual dependence upon him. And all these are the beginnings here, of that eternal kingdom which is revealed to us. Perfect knowledge, perfect love, perfect union, perfect conformity between the everlasting God and his reasonable creatures is the clearest idea which we can form of heaven, where we are told that “the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be, and that his servants shall serve him, and they shall reign for ever and ever.”⁶

Now, then, we must acquire the elements of that knowledge which is to be completed hereafter in “the spirits of just men made perfect.” And

⁶ Rev. xxii. 3—5.

to possess it, is the proof for which we must search in ourselves, as evidence of having been *given to Christ*.

To *know* God with a real and spiritual knowledge, is so to know his justice, as to feel that it condemns us ; so to know his mercy, as to seek it for ourselves ; so to know his power, as to fear offending him ; so to know his holiness, as to aspire towards it, and make it the object of our imitation. And the real knowledge of Jesus Christ, is to see in him the “one mediator between God and man ;” between the justice of God, and the rebellious iniquity of his creatures : to know him as the Redeemer, who having so loved us, has a title to our love ; as the Lord, who having bought us with a price, has a right to our service and allegiance. Such was the knowledge which St. Paul expresses, when he says, “I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to keep what I have committed to him.” And such was the knowledge which those had of whom St. Peter speaks : “Christ Jesus, whom not having seen ye love ; and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable.”

This is life eternal. And ever remember the important truth which is here implied : Without this is NOT life eternal.

LECTURE LXXXII.

THE LAST PRAYER OF CHRIST TO THE FATHER. HE INTERCEDES FOR THE APOSTLES.

JOHN xvii. 4—10.

4. *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*

5. *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

The opening chapter of this Gospel reveals to us that “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God.” From this glory he descended, “was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” that he might fulfil the will of God. That will had been performed; the work of redemption done. And now, as he was returning to *the glory which he had with the Father before the world was*, he looks back upon his finished work with a satisfaction which he alone, of all who have ever borne the form of man, could justly claim. *I have glo-*

rified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

One part of that work was to select and prepare a company of men, who should carry on God's gracious purpose, and announce the "gospel of peace." These are the principal subjects of that communion of the Son with the Father, which is here disclosed for our admiration and instruction.

6. *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.*

Out of the world at large, and out of the general inhabitants of Judea, a certain number had been chosen, and *given* to the Lord Jesus as his apostles, that they might attend him during his ministry, and afterwards "be witnesses unto him both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." These were God's. All souls are his: "we are all his offspring;" in him "we live, and move, and have our being." He had given them to Jesus: who now says, *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.* When we read the account of the calling of the several apostles; how, at a word, they "left all, and followed him;" we cannot avoid seeing that they were in an especial manner *given* to our Lord. The preparation of all hearts is from above, and whoever at any time becomes a follower of Christ, is drawn to be-

come so by the Spirit of God. But independently of ordinary means, independently of the usual operations of divine grace, these had a more evident and immediate call.

Thus far their case was peculiar, but no farther : for what the Lord proceeds to say concerning them, belongs to every one who believes in Christ through their word.

7. *Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.*

8. *For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me : and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.*

9. *I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me ; for they are thine.*

10. *And all mine are thine, and thine are mine ; and I am glorified in them.*

Here our Lord, in mercy to our weakness and natural fears, has left us an example of that “ intercession,” which, says St. Paul, “ he ever liveth to make” for his people. The high priest, under the Jewish law, was appointed to make such intercession : and Christ Jesus, whose office had been prefigured by the high priest among the Jews, here pleads with God for the completion of the blessings which had been prepared for those who believe in him, and for which his death upon the cross was now so soon to pay the purchase.

And he has carefully pointed out to us, who those are for whom he specially intercedes:—those whom God has given him. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, the unbelieving unrepenting world: but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.*

Here then a fearful, anxious, soul might naturally say—Could I but feel that these words applied to myself, and to a case like mine, I should be happy. Could I but believe that God had separated me *out of the world, and given me to Christ*, I should be at ease.

The Lord, however, has not been inattentive to minds which might be thus perplexed, and has provided for them a sufficient comfort and assurance. At the same moment that he has limited his prayer to certain objects—*I pray for them*—He has also described the objects of his preference, and recorded the grounds of their high privilege. *I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me: and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.* This is Christian faith; and Christian faith is the same, whether in an apostle, or in the humblest disciple. To receive his words, as the words of God, to receive his redemption, as provided of God for a lost and sinful race, is to “receive him:” and to as many as receive him,—in whatever age they live, and to whatever duties they are called,—“to them

gives he power to become the sons of God." They are his; and his are God's: and he is glorified in them.

Look then, not to the secret choice, or to the mysterious gift: but look to the signs and tokens: if these are with you, the rest follows. All who come to Christ, and receive the word of God from him and keep it, are given him of the Father, and are the subjects of this prayer. They are the fruit of his travail, the recompense of his suffering. "For this is the will of him that sent him, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him may have everlasting life: and he will raise him up at the last day."¹

✠ We must not suppose, however, that Christ has no concern for the world at large, because he confines this prayer to those who had received him, and says, *I pray for them; I pray not for the world*. We are assured by the apostles, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself:" we are assured by our Lord's declaration, that he "came not to judge the world, but that the world through him might be saved;" and before the conclusion of this very prayer he expresses a desire, that "the world may believe that he came forth from God." But although he is "the Saviour of all men," he is "especially" the Saviour "of those that believe."² It is by receiving him, by entering within his fold, and becoming part of

¹ John vi. 40.

² 1 Tim. iv. 10.

his flock, and being united with him in covenant ; it is thus that men must secure his spiritual intercession. By that covenant they are one with him, and he with them : he takes them under his care ; and as a part of that protection he prays the Father for them, that he may be glorified in their everlasting salvation. For these he pleads, as we have read ; *I pray for them which thou hast given me.* They are not of the world ; but they are those *whom thou gavest me out of the world.* They have not rejected my offer of mercy : they have not denied the authority in which I came ; and therefore I pray for them, that they may “ keep the beginning of their confidence stedfast unto the end,” and be “ counted worthy to attain that world, and the resurrection of the dead.”

Who would not desire to have a place in this prayer ? What blessing can be so great, as to enjoy an interest in the intercession of the Son of God ? To whom, then, is such blessing given ? He invites every individual to the full enjoyment of it. “ Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” But let it be remembered, we must come unto him, that we may possess it. He *prays not for the world*, but for those who are separate from the world ; who have left its service and withdrawn themselves from its dominion, that they may serve a better master, be safe under his protection, and be blessed by his reward.

LECTURE LXXXIII.

CONTINUATION OF THE PRAYER OF
CHRIST FOR HIS APOSTLES.

JOHN xvii. 11—13.

11. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.*

12. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*

13. *And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*

We see here the care of a tender parent, who remembers the children whom he is leaving, and provides for their comfort and security when he is gone. The disciples were to continue in this world. The purposes of God required it. And being in the world, they would be exposed to the temptations connected with the world: subject to all the evils into which corrupt nature is liable to

fall, according to the circumstances in which it is placed. And how many and various the snares to which the apostles would be exposed ! First, reproach and obloquy : as Peter soon experienced, when questioned in the high priest's palace : " Art not thou also one of this man's disciples ? " " Did I not see thee in the garden with him ? " Then persecution and danger ; the being brought before kings and councils, and " straitly threatened, that they speak at all no more, nor teach in the name of Jesus."¹ Great therefore was the danger from without ; lest some of those chains with which the world lays hold upon the heart—the fear of man, the love of earthly things, or the attachment of relations and friends—should entangle them as they entangle others, and draw them back from the service of Christ and of God. But there was another danger within themselves ; the danger of pride, envy, emulation, strife, variance. Their peculiar vocation made the apostles more liable to these evils, than any other men : and they are evils into which other men in somewhat similar circumstances, but with far less temptation, fall too commonly. This seems to be the especial danger which their Lord had now in view : for his prayer is, *Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are.* That none may separate themselves from the chosen band, like

¹ Acts iv. 17, 11.

² Demas afterwards, “having loved this present world :”² and that there be no divisions amongst them, no jealousies, no heartburnings: but that *they may be one, as we are*. One in will, and one in action: one in interests and one in counsels. Thus, *Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.* It must needs be that the Scripture be fulfilled, and that the Son of man should “go, as was written of him.” It must needs be that the Scripture be fulfilled, as to the manner of his being betrayed;—that, as is prophesied in the Psalms, (Ps. xli. 9,) “mine own familiar friend, whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, should lift up his heel against me:” that another should “take the office of Judas,” whose “days were few” and evil.³ *The son of perdition* then is lost, “being before of old ordained unto this condemnation.”⁴ *The rest I have kept in thy name:* my doctrine has instructed them, my warnings have defended them, my example has encouraged them. But *now I come to thee:* and *these whom thou hast given me* must be left like other men, to be encompassed with difficulties and dangers, and to be assaulted by the evil one.

² 2 Tim. iv. 10.³ See Ps. cix. 8; and Acts i. 20.⁴ See Jude 4.

Still let them be left under a protection which all men have not—though all may find it and enjoy it, if they seek it with their whole heart:—*Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me.*

Here the Lord has presented, to all his future disciples, a lively picture of their situation;—their dangers, and their security. It is evidently no slight or easy task which they have to perform, in “working out their salvation;” in “making their calling and election sure.” They *are in the world*. He to whom they are given is *no more in the world*. The world endangers them: it is present, it is visible, it is tangible: they are daily concerned with it: and he is far above out of their sight: not manifestly at hand to protect, or instruct, or warn.

But their security is, that they have One above to care for them, to provide for them; and though Satan may “desire to have them that he may sift them as wheat,” to pray for them, “that their faith fail not.”⁵

And he proves to us by the intercession which is here recorded, how tenderly he is affected towards those who believe in him and commit themselves to him. He still retains the same heart, the same pity, the same compassionate nature, which dictated these words. He is not like what we might

⁵ Luke xxii. 31.

imagine in a perfect being, he does not see with contempt and scorn the temptations to which flesh and blood is exposed, and to which it too often yields: he does not despise and reject his people, because of the trifles which disturb or please, occupy or divert them. It is our consolation, and it is told us as our consolation, that “we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”⁶ Christ, exalted as he is, is tenderly affected towards all those who are left for a while to work out their salvation in the world, he sees their difficulties, and has pity for their trials and their weaknesses.

If any man were tossed by a storm at sea, and while striving against it, could be persuaded that his friends on shore knew the perils which he was encountering, and were praying for his deliverance and safety,—the thought would comfort and encourage him.⁷ And Christ’s disciples have this comfort. His heart is with them. He who is always near, is touched with a sense of their infirmities and trials, and is praying for them in heaven. How ought this to cheer us also, and strengthen us to maintain the contest against the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and whatever is not of the Father, but of the world!” He “whose we are, and whom we serve,” is praying the Father to help our infir-

⁶ Heb. iv. 15.

⁷ Manton. Disc. on John xvii.

mities, to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances, and to bring us safely out of a world of dangers, into a world of peace and righteousness. *Now I come to thee, but these are in the world. Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, and who have given themselves to me, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves, and that I may be glorified in them.*

LECTURE LXXXIV.

CONTINUATION OF THE PRAYER OF
CHRIST THAT HIS APOSTLES MAY BE
PRESERVED FROM THE EVIL OF THE
WORLD.

JOHN xvii. 14—16.

14. *I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they were not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

15. *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*

16. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

Our Lord here speaks of the state of his apostles, in reference to the world in which they were living. They were *not of it*: they were separated from it by a decided line. *They were not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* Their views, their pursuits, their interests, all are different from the objects and sentiments of those from among whom they have been taken.

And this difference had been produced by his word; the word which he had given them from the Father. *I have given them thy word.* That was true of them, which St. Peter applies afterwards to the Christians whom he was addressing. They were “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”¹

This word had told them that it was the Father’s will that they should come unto Him through the Son: that they should believe on him whom he had sent: that they should take his yoke upon them, and learn of him, and so find rest unto their souls. They had received this word; had hearkened to the invitation which Jesus gave; had remained with him, when others “went back and walked no more with him:”² had deliberately chosen to leave all and follow him, because they believed that he was “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

¹ 1 Pet. i. 2, 3.

² John vi. 66.

The world around them ; its leaders, the priests, and scribes, and Pharisees, and the multitude who were governed by them, had rejected the word which the apostles had received. Therefore *the world hated them* : as it does hate those who separate themselves from it, who pursue a contrary course from the great majority, and in so doing,—by necessary consequence, though with no express intention,—seem to cast a censure upon those whom they leave behind. We have an instance in the man whose blindness had been removed, and who ventured to defend against the Pharisees the character of his benefactor. (John ix. 32.) “ Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us ? And they cast him out.” Jesus had before alluded to this enmity, when discoursing with his brethren in Galilee.³ There he himself explains it. “ The world cannot hate you ;” has no reason for hating you : “ but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.”

✕ The obvious remedy and consolation would be, that as the Lord whom they had followed, was now to be removed from the world which had hated him, to a world congenial to him, so should his

³ John vii. 7.

disciples too. "To depart, and be still with Christ," would be far better than to sojourn here in the midst of enmity and opposition, and put to hazard that faith which had hitherto persevered.

This, however, is not our Lord's prayer for these his people. *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*

It was impossible that they should be taken out of the world. Work was given them to do. They were to be "witnesses" of Christ: they were to carry the message of reconciliation: they were to set on high and display to public view that light which should "light every man that cometh into the world."

But does the same reason apply to the disciples of Christ, and is it still the will of God that they should not be taken out of the world? Undoubtedly it is still the same, and for reasons which will prevail unto the end. God chooses that they should be tried. Though he knows what the event will be, and needs not that any should show him, still he chooses that his people should prove their faith, and patience, and labours of love, in sight of the many witnesses by which they are surrounded, and should, "after much tribulation, enter into the kingdom" prepared for them.⁴ Their "tribulation must work patience; and pa-

⁴ Acts xiv. 22.

tience, experience ; and experience, hope.”⁵ They must submit to the cross before they wear the crown. They must consent to “suffer with Christ,” that they may also “reign with him.” And as his will concerning themselves is thus accomplished, so likewise his purpose towards others is promoted. The faithful disciples of Christ are living witnesses of the truth of his revelation and the power of his grace ; and the *word given* by Christ to the apostles, the same word handed down from age to age, and not merely written in a book, but written in the hearts and read in the practice of living men, causes multitudes to fall down on their knees before God, and acknowledge that “God is in them of a truth.”⁶

Our Lord, therefore, does not pray that God *should take them out of the world, but that he should keep them from the evil.*⁷ From the evil one himself, and from the evil which proceeds from him, as its author and contriver.

Satan, the hater of righteousness and holiness, the enemy of God and man, will grievously assail those who are taken out of his hands. We are warned so. “Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour.”⁸ He is allowed to be the author and instrument of much of that trial which all the people of God are designed to undergo, that “they which

⁵ Rom. vi. 4.

⁶ See 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

⁷ ἀπο του πονηρου.

⁸ 1 Pet. v. 8.

are approved may be made manifest.”⁹ But this enemy they cannot overcome in their own strength. He finds within too much in league with him, to be conquered by any power of ours; he knows too well the weaknesses which give him advantage over us, and the situation by which we are endangered.

Hence the prayer of Christ, that the faith of his disciples “fail not:” that God would *keep them from the evil*: “keep them by his power through faith unto salvation.” It is the same prayer which we offer daily for ourselves: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

And how great is the comfort which we possess, in knowing of this defence and thinking of this prayer! To be assured that he who thus supported the apostles whom he was about to leave behind in a sinful world, is still at the right-hand of God, to support all who “believe in him through their word!” That our salvation is the object of his desire, his care, his intercession! And that he will suffer none to perish who commit themselves to him! He “with the temptation will make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.” “If God be for us, who shall be against us?” For “who hath resisted his will?” And He is “for us.” If “he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!”¹

⁹ 1 Cor, xi. 19.

¹ Rom. viii. 32.

To Him, then, “ who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory, and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and ever.”²

LECTURE LXXXV.

CONTINUATION OF THE PRAYER OF CHRIST THAT HIS APOSTLES MAY BE SANCTIFIED.

JOHN xvii. 17—19.

17. *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

18. *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*

19. *And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*

We see from this prayer what our Lord thought most needful for his disciples. What was needful for them, is needful for us: what he prayed for in their behalf, ought to be the first and chief object of our prayer, for ourselves and our children, and all in whose welfare we are concerned.

² Jude 25.

His prayer before had been, that they might be delivered from the evil that is in the world. And now he entreats farther, that they might be *sanctified*: “redeemed from all iniquity, and purified unto God as a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” That God might have such a people—a people to whom he might be a Father, and they to him as dear children—was the purpose for which Christ had taken man’s nature upon him. *For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.* For this object a body had been prepared for him: he had come to do the will of God; had been solemnly acknowledged by him, as his “beloved Son;” and was now set apart, as “a Lamb without blemish, and without spot,” a voluntary sacrifice to the justice and holiness of the Father. Thus he had *sanctified himself*; as he had “power to lay down his life, and power to take it again;” and *for their sakes*: that he might bring them to everlasting salvation:—and not them alone; but might also bring to the same glory “those that should believe in him through their word:” in all ages and in all countries, “as many as receive him and believe in his name.”

Those for whom he was interceding now, were the first fruits of his self-consecration. And that others might be partakers of the same, he was now sending these out into the world. *As thou hast*

sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. With the same spirit, humbling themselves, “pleasing not themselves,” that by all means they might gain some: and with the same purpose; carrying the message of mercy, “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God.” Christ had been sent, warning men to repent, and “flee from the wrath to come.” And so his apostles were sent, warning every man, that God “had appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.”¹ Christ had come, declaring that he was “the way, the truth, and the life; that no man cometh unto the Father, but by him.” So his apostles went, proclaiming that there was no other name under heaven by which we may be saved. Christ had invited all to share his mercy, declaring that whoever came unto him, he would in no wise cast out. And so his apostles went, declaring, that “God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”² Christ had encouraged every one to apply to him; for the grace which he would give them, should be a living, purifying stream, “springing up into everlasting life.” And so his apostles went, directing men to supply their poverty from his fulness, and sustain their own weakness by his strength and power. Christ had been sent with one great

¹ Acts xvii. 31.² 1 Tim. ii. 4.

and general purpose, “to seek and to save that which was lost.” And now he sent his apostles out with the command, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Thus they were sent, as he was sent, to build on his foundation, he himself being “the chief corner stone.”

Let each reflect for a moment, and consider whether this message has reached themselves. That which Jesus committed to his apostles, his apostles “committed to other faithful men;”³ and the lamp of eternal life has been transferred from hand to hand, till now it has reached us “on whom the ends of the world are come.” Have we received it, as the light by which we are to be directed? Are we guided by it? Or are we still in spiritual darkness: and would the apostle have reason to address us in the words of that universal summons, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light?”⁴

The apostles, who were commissioned to call the world to righteousness, must needs be themselves as patterns to all who should become their followers, “in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”⁵ And therefore their Master prays that they may be made such. *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

³ 2 Tim. ii. 2.⁴ Eph. v. 14.⁵ 1 Tim. iv. 12.

Called as they were, and chosen as they were, for God's especial purpose, they were still to be sanctified and fitted for his use, through those means which he has appointed for the renewal of our corrupt nature. *Sanctify them through thy word.* The word of God is the great instrument of sanctification: the weapon in the hand of the Spirit, by which the work of sanctification is carried on. Ineffective indeed without the Spirit, as the sword without the hand which ought to wield it: but mighty through the Spirit of God to the pulling down all the strong holds of Satan. "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."⁶ As they were to be preachers and teachers of this word, so they must needs keep it, and hide it in their hearts: it should prove to them a treasury, out of which they should be able to instruct, and edify, and comfort both themselves and those who heard them. For that which David wrote, will be true to the end of time. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judg-

⁶ Heb. iv. 12.

ments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”⁷

LECTURE LXXXVI.

JESUS EXTENDS HIS INTERCESSION TO
ALL WHO SHOULD HEREAFTER BE-
LIEVE IN HIM.

JOHN xvii. 20—23.

20. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

21. *That they may all be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

In a few short hours “the Captain of our salvation” was now to “be made perfect through sufferings.” And already he looks onward to the recompense of those sufferings; the “bringing many sons to glory.”¹ Known unto him are all the children of God from the beginning of the world; and he now makes them, as well as his immediate disciples, the objects of his prayer. He does not

⁷ Ps. xix. 7—9.

¹ See Heb. ii. 10.

pray for his apostles alone, nor for those only who had already followed him, and remained with him; but he extends his view to distant times and future ages; to those who should hereafter come to believe in him *through the word* of those whom he was now sending forth to complete the work which he had begun. He prays that they, *which shall believe in him through their word*, may form an harmonious and united body: *that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.* And that being thus united, the children of one family, the members of one body, the subjects of one king, they might act as witnesses to the world: *that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* x

Our Lord had said before, “I pray not for the world.” His first purpose was to pray for those already “given him out of the world:” that they might be maintained in a firm and consistent course of life, “a peculiar people,” none of whom should be overcome by the malice of Satan, and so betray the trust and endanger the cause committed to their hands. These, therefore, are the main subjects of his present intercession. But it was not for their own sake, merely, and to secure their own salvation, that these had been “chosen out of the world.” They were chosen and prepared and commissioned for the world’s sake: *that the world might believe that God had sent him*: believe that God “was in Christ reconciling

the world unto himself:" so that *through the word*, of the apostles first, and afterwards in all future time through the word of "other faithful men,"² the "disciples should be multiplied greatly:"³ multitudes might "awake, and arise from the dead, and Christ should give them light."⁴

And it was so. The prayer was heard and answered.⁺ We read of the first believers, that they "continued with one accord, in prayer and supplication:"⁵ that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own: but they had all things common."⁶ Thus "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," "multitudes both of men and women."⁷ And every fresh believer was an additional evidence to the world that God had sent Christ Jesus, whom they, to whom he was sent, had "with wicked hands crucified and slain."

The world has never been without this evidence. There have been, as there are, "divisions among" Christians. All have not "been like-minded one towards another." All have not "had the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."⁸ All have not kept the apostles' rule, and been "perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in

² 2 Tim. ii. 2. ³ Acts v. 14; vi. 7. ⁴ Eph. v. 14.

⁵ Acts i. 14. ⁶ iv. 32. ⁷ ii. 47; and v. 15.

⁸ Rom. xv. 5; Phil. ii. 2.

the same judgment.”⁹ But from the earliest times there have existed multitudes of persons agreeing in this great truth: “God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”¹ These, whether more in number or fewer, form the church of Christ: and these, foreseen, foreknown, by him, are here made the objects of his special intercession. *I pray for them who shall believe in me through my apostles’ word.*

Of the privileges which belong to them he speaks in terms which surprise us, when he proceeds to say that he imparts to them a share in his own glory.

22. *And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one:*

23. *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*

St. James had great reason to leave it written in his epistle, “Let the brother of low degree”—we may say, let the Christian of every degree—“rejoice, in that he is exalted.”² Highly indeed, as we here see, are those exalted, who are made partakers of the covenant, and, “being justified by faith, have peace with God, through Jesus

⁹ 1 Cor. i. 10.

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

² James i. 9.

Christ.” “The grace of their Lord, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost” is theirs, and unites them, and supports them, and establishes them, and perfects them. And so the world is brought to know that “God is with them of a truth,” that he in whom they trust, “the author and finisher of their faith,” *hath loved them*, and is watching over them. Thus they furnish a perpetual evidence of the truth : as the Lord again says, *that the world may know that thou hast sent me.*

When Jesus first began to perform his miracles, and show the power in which he came, we are told that he cleansed a man of his leprosy : and then said to him, “Go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.”³ It was a testimony that one had come into the world who had a claim to their attention. The Christian church, the body of believers in Christ Jesus, is a perpetual testimony of the like kind. It may be compared to an ark, ever floating through the wide and troubled waters of the world in which we live ; and inviting all to enter it, and take shelter from the threatening storm. Here they may find rest, though the rains fall, and the winds blow, and beat upon the soul. Many would like the safety which it offers, and many would wish to reach the haven to which it is bound, but they are deterred by the restraints and

³ Matt. viii. 4.

labours of the voyage, and refuse or delay to enter in. But there are likewise many who become alarmed by the flood which threatens on the one hand, or allured by the calm which tempts them on the other. And these from time to time are brought by the Spirit to climb the vessel's side, and are added to the number of the ransomed, and join the safe and blessed company who are thus passing over the flood which separates them from the heavenly Canaan.

Let all remember, that the time to seek such a place of safety, is before the danger is come. The time to enter the ark, is while the deluge is still distant. When "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened"—"the Lord had shut the door" of the ark which carried Noah and his family. And when "the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the face of the earth, the ark went upon the face of the waters." "All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."

And so "when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations," there shall be comfort and peace and safety to *all that have believed in him through the apostles' word.*

LECTURE LXXXVII.

CONCLUSION OF THE PRAYER OF CHRIST
FOR HIS APOSTLES.

JOHN xvii. 24—26.

24. *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.*

Thus it is seen, according to the words of St. John in a preceding chapter, how “Jesus, having loved his own which were in the world, loved them unto the end.”¹ He concludes the prayer which we have been lately engaged in considering, with this petition: *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am.* From the beginning he had loved them, and separated them from the world; and now before he leaves the world, he provides for their eternal welfare; provides that “where he is, there also may his servants be,”² *that they may behold his glory*, and the Redeemer and the redeemed may rejoice to-

¹ ch. xiii. 1.² xii. 16.

gether. And they are so represented, in every glimpse which is given us of the heavenly kingdom. "There shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads."³

That they may behold my glory! Let this teach us to raise and exalt our conception of the world to come. Scripture says, that they which are "counted worthy to attain that world, and the resurrection of the dead," are "as the angels of God in heaven." Scripture says, that "they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." Scripture says that they "shall ever be with the Lord:" shall see him "face to face;" shall *behold the glory* which he had with the Father *before the foundation of the world*; though now he had "humbled himself;" had condescended to be "made flesh, and dwell among" men. This is the heaven which Scripture bids us look for; and not look for only, but prepare for: since if this is heaven, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

So that the difference between those whom *God has given to Christ*, and those whom he has not given, is as visible in their present state as it will be in their future condition. Those who will hereafter be partakers of Christ's glory, are here dis-

³ Rev. xxii. 3, 4.

tinguished as desiring it, seeking it, and living for it. Those who are to “rejoice with him” in heaven, have begun by being his subjects in this world. So his concluding words imply.

25. *O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.*

26. *And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

Those, then, for whom Christ is now interceding, are those who differed from the world in this,—*the world had not known* the Father; but these had known him; and had given this proof of knowing him, that they had received the message which he had sent by his beloved Son.

And here is removed whatever doubt and difficulty might hang upon our minds from the words preceding—I will that those *whom thou hast given me*, be with me where I am. *Whom thou hast given me.* And who are these? We cannot examine the book in which their names are written. But there is an outward superscription which all can read. *These have known that thou hast sent me.* They have received the Son, in the character which the Father sent him to sustain; received “him as made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”⁴ They

⁴ 1 Cor. i. 30.

have received him, as giving heavenly wisdom to those who were ignorant without him, as giving righteousness to those who had no righteousness of their own, as sanctifying those who were by nature corrupt and sinful, as redeeming those who were lying under condemnation.

It is a natural question, (we would that all should ask it,) Are we among those whom *God has given to Christ, that they may behold his glory?* And it must be answered by entering into our own hearts, and seeing what our practice is. *These have known that thou hast sent me.* Such is their short but sufficient description. They have known that thou hast sent me, “to save my people from their sins.” They have not closed their eyes to the proofs that I came from God. They have not closed their ears against the truths which they heard from me. They have not “loved darkness rather than light,” because of the evil deeds which they desired to persist in. But they have heard my invitation, and have listened to it; have “taken my yoke upon them, and learnt of me, that they might find rest unto their souls.”

Such were they, who were the objects of the Redeemer’s prayer, and for whose comfort and encouragement he left the words on record, *Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.* Of these he says, *I have declared unto them thy*

name, and will declare it; that the love where-with thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. Because “the world had not known God:” because “no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” “And this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.”

This is life eternal. But it must be reserved, for that eternal state to understand fully the secret wonders involved in this mysterious prayer. St. Paul felt that he could ask no higher blessing for his beloved disciples, than that “being rooted and grounded in love, they might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God.”⁵

⁵ Eph. iii. 17—19.

LECTURE LXXXVIII.

JESUS IS TAKEN BY THE OFFICERS AND SOLDIERS, AND BROUGHT BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST.

JOHN xviii. 1—23.

1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.*¹

2. *And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place ; for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.*

3. *Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.*

4. *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye ?*

5. *They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.*

6. *As soon then as he said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground.*

7. *Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye ? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.*

¹ The garden called Gethsemane.

8. *Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he : if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way :*

9. *That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.*

A striking scene is represented to us here. “The rulers stand up and take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed.”² But in this they accomplish the secret purposes of him against whom they had conspired ; he against whom they had conspired, and whom they came to take as a criminal, by surprise meets the band of men and officers, and says at once, *I am he whom ye seek.* That which ye come to do against me, is determined from above, or it could not be done at all : and therefore ye hear me openly declare, *I am he.*

It was quickly proved that whatever power they had against him, was “given them from above :” for, hearing him acknowledge, *I am he*, instead of seizing him, they *went backward, and fell to the ground.* An emblem of that time which is foretold, when all the enemies of Christ shall “say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”³

Still, however, Jesus was to suffer, though he laid down his life of himself, and no man took it from him. But he first provides for the safety of his apostles. “Those whom he loved, he loved unto the end.” *If ye seek me, let these go their*

² Ps. ii. 2.

³ Rev. vi. 16.

way. He knew their strength, that it was but weakness: therefore he proportions their trial to it: and allows them not to be tempted “above that which they were able to bear.” Hereafter they might have resolution to say, “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself.”⁴ At present their strength was but like “the bruised reed;” it must not be overmuch tried: their faith was but that of “smoking flax;” the spark must not be quenched. Therefore let these be permitted to go their way; that the saying lately spoken might remain true unto the end: *Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.*

Such tenderness may encourage the humble followers of a compassionate Lord, whilst they “work out their salvation with fear and trembling.”

There was, however, amongst them one who, though weak and unstable, was ardent in his zeal, and eager in his Master’s cause.

10. *Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus.*

11. *Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?*

12. *Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him;*

13. *And led him away to Annas first; for he was*

⁴ Acts xx. 24.

father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.

14. *Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.*

15. *And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.*

16. *But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.*

17. *Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art thou not also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.*

18. *And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.*

19. *The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.*

20. *Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whether the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.*

21. *Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.*

22. *And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?*

23. *Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?*

We are shocked, as there is reason to be, at the indignity offered to him whom we adore as our Lord and our God. But wise ends have been served by it, on account of which it might be permitted.

1. We are taught the proper way to meet indignities. Jesus, “when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not.” But he appealed to law and reason. *If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?* He silenced and convicted his oppressor. If any thing has been done against the ordinances of the state or the rights of individuals, *bear witness of the evil*; I am here to answer it. But if not, *why smitest thou me*, with no authority of law, and in opposition to all justice and decency? So St. Paul, following his Master’s example, remonstrated with those who were preparing to try him with torture. “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?”⁵ God has so ordered human affairs, that the protection which the enmity of the adversary would often deny his servants, is cast around them by the laws which individual interest obliges men to observe.

2. Another and a different purpose is likewise answered by this circumstance. Jesus suffered

⁵ Acts xxii. 25.

this harsh and cruel treatment, as one who bore a message from God unto the world. This enmity would not have been displayed towards him, if he had not appeared as “a preacher of righteousness:”—if he had not said to the people, “Except ye repent, ye shall all perish:”—if he had not testified against them that they knew not God in whom they made their boast; that they nullified his laws; that “their deeds were evil.” Many of his followers, at different times, have been called to endure a like measure of ill-treatment; and they have had this consolation under injury, “The servant is not greater than his lord.” If they are despised and rejected, if they are treated as Barabbas was not treated, (“who *for a certain sedition and murder* was cast into prison,”⁶) still let them rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for so persecuted they their Master which was before them, and “if so be that they suffer with him, they shall be also glorified together.”⁷ He “for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.”

If then any man be called “to suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed: but let him glorify God on this behalf.” Nay, let him “rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings: that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also, with exceeding joy.”⁸

⁶ Luke xxiii. 19 and 25.

⁷ Rom. viii. 17.

⁸ 1 Pet. iv. 16, and 13.

LECTURE LXXXIX.

JESUS EXPLAINS TO PILATE THE NATURE
OF HIS KINGDOM.

JOHN xviii. 24—40.

24. *Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.*

25. *And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.*

26. *One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?*

27. *Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.*

We are reminded here of the saying of Moses, (Numb. xxxii. 23,) “Behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out.” When *the cock crew*, and foretold that the morning was approaching, an arrow pierced the soul of Peter, of which no one present but himself was conscious. St. Matthew acquaints us, that he “remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt

deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.”¹

It was happy that his sin did find him out, and was not concealed from himself; that his heart was not “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,” but, like David before him, he confessed that he had “sinned against the Lord:” he went out, and wept bitterly.

28. *Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.*

29. *Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?*

30. *They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.*

31. *Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:*

32. *That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.*²

33. *Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the king of the Jews?*

¹ Matt. xxvi. 75.

² Execution by the cruel mode of crucifixion was only in use among the Romans. Unless, therefore, Jesus had been delivered to the Roman governor, he would not have been crucified.

34. *Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?*

35. *Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?*

36. *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.*

37. *Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*

³ 38. *Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.*

39. *But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews.*

40. *Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.*

The question asked by Pilate, was concerning Christ's kingdom. And in no sense was *his kingdom of this world*. He had it not of the will of man. It was not to be set up by "carnal weapons:" the power by which it should be supported, was spiritual: and the citizenship of its subjects was not on earth, but in heaven.³

³ Ἡμῶν πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπαρχε. Our conversation, citizenship, is in heaven. Phil. iii. 20.

This is very obvious. We must not forget, however, what is no less true. He is a king, though not an earthly king: he has a kingdom, though his kingdom is not *of this world*. Pilate said unto him, *Art thou a king then?* Jesus answered, *Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.* It is a calm and quiet mode of assenting to the truth which had been put into the mouth of Pilate. I am a king: *but my kingdom is not from hence. Thou sayest that I am a king.* And thou sayest truly. From God, and from heaven, though not *of this world*, or from man, Christ has a kingdom. It is given him of God: as he has said, the Father hath “delivered all things into his hand,” and has “given him power over all flesh.” And of his sovereignty it is written, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom:”⁴ and “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” “He must reign,” we are assured, “till he hath put all enemies under his feet. How awful are his own words;—the words of him who is “meek and lowly in heart,” when he alludes to the future doom of the disobedient: “Those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me.”⁵

In this sense, therefore, Christ would have a

⁴ See Heb. i. 8.

⁵ Luke xix. 27.

kingdom, even if none obeyed him. But he who has assigned him the power, has given him subjects too. According to his own words, addressed to the Father: "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." As men are the subjects of him whom they obey, he whose subjects obey him is a king. He reigns in the hearts of those who believe in him. At the moment when he was speaking; when he was bound as a prisoner, and seemed to have resigned all earthly authority and power; even then there were some hearts in which he was reigning: there were some who were ready to act, or to forbear to act, as he prescribed. The number of these quickly increased, as "the word of God grew mightily and prevailed." And as far as their number is extended, and as far as this dominion is felt and recognized, so far he is a king.

The truth, then, which Pilate inquired for in a trifling spirit, but which he did not stay to hear, is known to us, and we must cherish it. From God and from heaven, though not of the world, or from man, Christ has a kingdom. His subjects are known by certain signs. Though his name is not visibly sealed in their foreheads,⁶ it is written in their hearts. And "the life which they live in the flesh, they live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them, and gave himself for them." By his laws they are ruled and guided. For by this may all men know that they are Christ's disciples, "that they keep his commandments."

⁶ See Rev. vii. 3; ix. 4.

Such is the kingdom which Christ possesses *in* this world, though not *of* this world. Here is its beginning. Its continuance will be for ever and ever in the mansions above. Those who belong to it here, will belong to it hereafter. And those who are to share it hereafter, must belong to it here. 'To those who "endure unto the end," "striving against sin;" to those who "overcome the world," believing "that Jesus is the Son of God," "he will grant to sit down with him on his throne."'⁷

"Let every man retire into himself, and see if he can find this kingdom in his heart: for if he find it not there, in vain shall he find it in all the world besides."⁸

LECTURE XC.

PILATE CONSENTS TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

JOHN xix. 1—16.

1. *Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.*

⁷ See 1 John v. 5; and Rev. iii. 21.

⁸ Hales.

2. *And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe,*

3. *And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.*

4. *Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.*

5. *Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!*

6. *When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.*

7. *The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.*

8. *When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid;*

9. *And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.*

10. *Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?*

11. *Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.*

Pilate naturally presumes upon his power over Jesus, as over any accused person who might be

brought before him. But here Jesus corrects his error. *Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.* This I have shown sufficiently, by the way in which I have hitherto preserved myself, and by the “miracles and wonders and signs” by which I have been “approved of God” amongst the people.¹ *He that hath delivered me unto thee* has seen these proofs that I am the Son of God: and they who have treated with him that he should thus deliver me up, have seen the same: therefore both he and they *have the greater sin.* Greater, not in comparison with the sin of Pilate, but greater than they would have had if they had not hardened their hearts and blinded their eyes against the truth. As had been said formerly,² “If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.”

This remark is not without its effect upon the governor.

12. *And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.*

13. *When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew Gabbatha.*

¹ Acts ii. 22.

² ch. xv. 24.

14. *And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!*

15. *But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The Chief Priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar.*

16. *Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.*

The character of Pilate is a far more common character than men are willing to suppose. Many act very much as he did, though in circumstances very different. And it is instructive to observe the manner in which two opposite principles contended within him: on the one hand, natural conscience and a sense of right; and on the other, love of the world.

Pilate had manifestly strong compunctious feelings. The calmness of the prisoner who stood before him; his refusal to propitiate his judge; his resignation under torture, and indifference concerning life or death; and doubtless, the indescribable sublimity of deportment which belonged to him under all circumstances, the grace and truth which never could forsake him;—all these affected Pilate in a manner to which he was not accustomed. *Whence art thou?* he inquires. *Speakest thou not unto me?* “Hearest thou not how many things these witness against thee?” “And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the gover-

nor marvelled greatly.”³ *And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him.*

These feelings of his own, were much aided by another circumstance. For “when he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man : for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.”⁴

Pilate was now in that state of mind which is the state of multitudes in a country like ours. What he felt in regard to Jesus, they feel in regard to the religion of Jesus. They perceive that it is not of man, but of God. Its doctrines show this ; so does the power which it exercises in the world. Perhaps many of their friends and relations have received it : are governed by its laws, and supported by its promises : they are themselves at times uneasy whilst they remain in a careless, undecided state ; and they would be very unwilling to appear the enemies of Christ or the Christian cause.

Why do they stand aloof ? Why continue only “almost Christians ?”

For the same reason, for a reason of the same sort as that which affected Pilate.

Whilst he was hesitating between conscience and duty on the one side, and the demands of the people on the other ; the Jews seized the interval of suspense, and *cried out, saying, If thou let this*

³ Matt. xxvii. 14.

⁴ Matt. xxvii. 19.

man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend : whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.

Now Pilate was a governor : and like other governors was anxious to approve himself to his superior, and probably to obtain some higher step, some better appointment. Not to be Cæsar's friend, was to be Cæsar's enemy. And *when Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth : and, after one more struggle—delivered him unto them to be crucified.*

Thus the world gained the victory. Conscience, reason, inclination fell before it. For a while the scale vibrated and seemed to hang doubtful : and if there had been no strong bias on the other side, conscience would have prevailed : but when it became clear that if conscience was to be obeyed and duty done, the world must be abandoned :—the things of the world risked, perhaps lost :—there was no farther question in Pilate's mind, and the world carried every other consideration down before it.

Now the same case frequently occurs in regard to Christian faith. There are many in the state which I was describing ; convinced, but not conquered ; silenced, but not subdued ; not denying, not doubting ; nay, in their inward mind and judgment, believing. Soon, however, a trial comes, which must bring the matter to an issue. They must show, whether the faith of Christ has dominion over them or not. This never can long

remain uncertain. No man can serve God and mammon: and it must always be soon evident which he is serving. In every rank and station of life temptations exist, and circumstances occur which put it to the proof. And when the trying time arrives in which it must be shown, whether a man is a disciple of Christ or of the world, too often the case of Pilate is acted over again. *If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend.* So said the Jews; and in like manner will the world say, If such and such is thy line of conduct, thou art not our friend. "Art thou also of Galilee?" Art thou also "this man's disciple?"

Such sayings, or the fear of such sayings, the fear of some worldly risk, the love of some worldly gain, are the immediate cause of ruin to many souls. They lead to compliances, omissions, and transgressions which grieve and quench the Spirit of God. What is wanting to them, is what was wanting to Pilate; such faith in "things not seen" and eternal, as shall overcome the influence of "things seen" and temporal.

And yet we can easily imagine a case which would have overcome the world in Pilate, and made him resolute instead of wavering. Suppose, for example, the appearance of Jesus, who was now standing as a criminal before Pilate, had been suddenly changed, and he had been seen by him as he was seen by the three apostles on Mount Tabor, when he "was transfigured before

them : and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.”⁵ Pilate would have no longer doubted : he would have decided at once, to offend the people, and defy Cæsar.

This shows us what we need. It is the business of faith, to set before us things that are not, as if they were : to enable us to see in Jesus, not the “man of sorrows” who stood before Pilate, but the Son of man who “shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.” It is the business of faith to give a substantial existence to “things hoped for,” so as to produce a real effect upon the mind, and enable it to overcome the world. The truths to which Jesus bore witness must be imprinted on the heart by the Spirit : and so realize things future and unseen, that earthly objects shall lose their hold : shall prevail no further than they justly and rightly may. We must see their perishable nature : how little they profit, and for how short a time. What remains to Pilate of all that he gained by complying with the sinful malice of the Jewish rulers ? What but the worm of remorse “that never dieth,” and the darkness which no light shall relieve ? And such at last will be the case with all, who in this present time of trial prefer the pleasures, or the gains, or the opinions of the world, before a consistent life of faith in the Son of God. For he has said, “Who-soever shall be ashamed of me and of my words

⁵ Matt. xvii. 2.

in this adulterous and sinful generation ; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”⁶

LECTURE XCI.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

JOHN xix. 17—30.

17. *And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha :*

18. *Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.*

19. *And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

20. *This title then read many of the Jews : for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city : and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.*

21. *Then said the Chief Priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews ; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.*

22. *Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.*

⁶ Mark viii. 38.

Thus God overrules the wrath of man, and causes it to minister to his praise. Pilate was disconcerted: angry with the chief priests, because they had urged him to act against his conscience and better judgment: and in obedience to his own humour, he refuses to gratify them further, or alter the title which he had framed, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. Caiaphas had already been led to say, "It is expedient that one man die for the people." So Pilate now testifies the truth, which before he was most anxious to deny. He had no scruple in allowing Jesus to be called the KING OF THE JEWS, now that he had been crucified. And it was as Christ crucified that he was king: and king not of that nation only, but "God had given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to all the children of God that are scattered abroad."

23. *Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.*

24. *They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.*

This is a part of a prophecy which David was inspired to utter. In the midst of complaints which

refer to himself and his own circumstances, he introduces many things which never did occur to himself, and which could only have been left written for the instruction and conviction of those who should live in future times. (Ps. xxii. 1, 7, 8, 14—18,) “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my complaint? All they that see me, laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”

No one can read these words, and not perceive that they did not and could not apply to David in his own person, but were put into his mouth for the purpose of confirming our faith, and showing us that nothing happened to the Lord which had not been foreseen and predetermined in the divine counsels.¹ So that both in his death, and in the

¹ Acts iv. 28; xiii. 27.

minute circumstances of his death, he was truly “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”²

Lord, increase our faith! It is not the Lamb slain, but the Lamb believed on and adored, which can avail to the saving of the soul.

25. *Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*

26. *When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved,³ he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!*

27. *Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

28. *After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.*

29. *Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.⁴*

30. *When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

² Rev. xiii. 8. ³ So St. John commonly describes himself.

⁴ Raising it on the stem of a species of hyssop, which resembles that of a reed. Thus fulfilling the scripture, which had said, (Ps. lxi. 21) “They gave me also gall for my meat, and when I was thirsty, they gave me vinegar to drink.” The accomplishment of this prophecy depended upon the attendance of the Roman soldiers at the crucifixion. This vinegar, mixed with water, was their beverage.

It is finished. Much that we know, and much more that is too mysterious to be known, is contained in this word.⁵ That has been finished which was predicted at the first, that the serpent should “bruise the heel” of the woman’s seed, and that he should “bruise the serpent’s head.” This was done: the prince of darkness had had his hour, and now his dominion was broken, his power weakened, his “works destroyed.”⁶

That was finished which had been prefigured in the law, by the rite of the passover, by the daily sacrifices, by the various purifications, by the office of the high priest, by all the types of that sacrifice for sins which Christ had now once offered: and by that one offering had perfected for ever them that are sanctified⁷

That was finished which Isaiah had prophesied. (liii. 7, 8,) speaking beforehand of the sufferings of Christ. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”

That was finished which Christ had engaged for,

⁵ The original contains more than can be briefly expressed: *τετελεσται.*

⁶ 1 John iii. 8.

Heb. x. 14.

when he undertook the work of redemption: all the will and counsel of God. He had “made his soul an offering for sin; he had borne the sin of many:” he had endured the Father’s wrath, he had submitted to the curse, he had drunk the cup of suffering to the dregs. All this had been completely finished; and nothing now remained but to return to the bosom of the Father. But Jesus showed even to the end, that he had “power to lay down his life:” that he “laid it down of himself, and no man took it from him.” For he waited till the last prophecy had been fulfilled, and he had tasted of the vinegar which they offered him. He waited till he was able to say, *It is finished*. And then he added, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:” *and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost*.

All had been completed which the Son was to perform in the work of man’s redemption. Let no man doubt that the Father’s part shall also be completed. Christ “once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” And God, who “so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son,” that he might thus suffer, God “is not unrighteous” to refuse the ransom which has been paid, or to reject those who come to him through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Christ could say, *It is finished*. And as the conditions have been finished, so likewise

shall the covenant be fulfilled. God will make good his word. “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied : by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many ;—because he hath poured out his soul unto death : and he was numbered with the transgressors ; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”⁸

LECTURE XCII.

THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY IN THE DEATH OF JESUS.

JOHN XIX. 31—42.

31. *The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.*

32. *Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.*

33. *But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs :*

⁸ Isa. liii. 11, 12.

34. *But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.*¹

35. *And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.*

36. *For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.*

37. *And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.*

The passage is remarkable, in which these latter words are found. (Zech. xii. 10.) “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: *and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced*, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.”

Of whom could the prophet say this? In what other man has it ever been fulfilled?

But it was fulfilled in regard to the Lord Jesus. Not two months after the event which we are considering, Peter affirmed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye

¹ Such is the case, when the regions of the heart are wounded. And St. John is thus particular, because some of the early heretics denied that Jesus actually underwent these sufferings and death, affirming that a phantom was substituted in his room. For this reason, probably, the evangelist proceeds to assert more solemnly than usual, *He that saw it bare record, and his record is true.* He saw what he could not have seen, unless real death had taken place.

have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”² Then, says the historian, “they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” It came to pass according to the prophecy: “God poured upon them the spirit of grace and of supplications:” they did “*look on him whom they had pierced,*” and did “mourn for him.”

But Peter said further unto them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” Thus they once more *looked on him whom they had pierced*;—before they regarded him with contrition and sorrow; now they looked to him for remission of sins: looked to the wounds which they had given, which he had received “in the house of his friends,”³ as the wounds suffered for their transgressions, and by which they might themselves be healed.

The time, we trust, will come hereafter, when the prophecy shall have a more complete fulfilment; and the house of Israel and the house of Judah generally shall answer to the expressions of the prophet: shall mourn for the sin of their na-

² Acts ii. 36, &c.

³ Zech. xiii. 6. “And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.”

tion, which crucified the "Prince of life;" shall look up to him whom they pierced, for reconciliation with God, and to that death which they caused, as the ransom for their sins.

Such a season appears to be foretold in Scripture, when God shall pour upon the descendants of Abraham this spirit of grace and of supplications. But we do not wait for any distant season that the words may receive an accomplishment. They are accomplished in all who believe in Christ Jesus, and look to him for salvation. On account of sin was he pierced: and the sins which pierced him were our sins. Every man's individual sin contributed to his death. And while we regard with astonishment and thankfulness the atonement which he made, we should also regard it with sorrow and contrition. Every man should think within himself, Had I not been under condemnation as a sinner, Judas would not have betrayed the Saviour, the people would not have insulted him, the soldiers would not have scourged him, Pilate would not have delivered him up, the nails and the spear would not have pierced him. If we felt this as we ought to feel it, we should more nearly resemble the language of Zechariah: we should be more sincerely "in bitterness for him;" for him who was "bruised for our iniquities, and wounded for our transgressions," and on whom it pleased the Lord to "lay the iniquity of us all."⁴

⁴ Isa. liii. 6.

There is still deeper reason for this sorrow, when they who have professed to receive “the grace of God which bringeth salvation,” and to believe in the name of Christ, have betrayed their faith, and walked unworthily of their high calling. The apostle speaks of such in the strongest language; saying, that they “crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”⁵ Yet are they not cast off for ever: they may still “repent, and do their first works.”⁶ “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins.”⁷ But what does that advocate plead? The very propitiation which they have disgraced; the very wounds which they have aggravated; the very cross on which sin was crucified to them, and they to sin. While then they still *look on him whom they pierced*, and are thankful that they are still permitted to look up to him, surely they must “mourn as one mourneth for his only son, and be in bitterness for him, as one that mourneth for his firstborn.”

38. *And after this Joseph of Arimathæa, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.*

39. *And there came also Nicodemus, which at the*

⁵ Heb. vi. 6.

⁶ Rev. ii. 5.

⁷ 1 John ii. 1, 2.

first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

40. *Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.*

41. *Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.*

42. *There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.*

Thus in an unexpected manner was the prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled, and he who had been “numbered with the transgressors,” was “with the rich in his death;” had the burial of a rich man. The event was unlikely, so was the mode in which *it* was brought about. Two persons who had hitherto kept back, and hesitated to avow themselves disciples of Jesus, come forward now and effect that which his own party of faithful adherents would have attempted in vain. Fear of man had hitherto made Joseph his disciple *secretly*: fear of man had carried Nicodemus to him *by night* for instruction. But now all such apprehensions vanish; sorrow for his loss, and love for his memory, became a stronger feeling than the world's opinion: and with this courageous proof of devotion and attachment, the body of Jesus is laid in the grave.

And when he shall hereafter appear, clothed in his “glorious body,” and all nations shall be

gathered before him, then shall also this which these disciples did, “be told for a memorial of them.”⁸

LECTURE XCIII.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS IS MADE KNOWN TO HIS DISCIPLES.

JOHN XX. 1—18.

1. *The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.*

2. *Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.*

3. *Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.*

4. *So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.*

5. *And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.*

⁸ See Matt. xxvi. 13.

6. *Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,*

7. *And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.*

8. *Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.*

9. *For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.*

St. John here tells us, what doubtless had never been erased from his own mind, the state in which the apostles were after the burial of Jesus. *As yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead.* They knew the words of scripture, but did not apply the proper meaning to them. The sabbath, therefore, though a “high day,” a festival, the greatest sabbath of the year, was to them a day of the deepest melancholy and gloom. They had seen him in whom they had trusted that he “should redeem Israel,” made a victim to the malice of his enemies: they had seen him whom they loved, and who loved them, expire in torments, and laid out in the tomb, where all their fondest hopes lay buried with him. Nothing now remained but to pay the last sad honours to his memory.

For this purpose, the sabbath was no sooner past, than very early in the morning came Mary Magdalene and other women with her “bringing

spices which they had prepared" to embalm the body.¹ On their way, "they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the sepulchre?" But when they came to the place, they found that the stone was taken away.² Still further, on entering in, they "found not the body of the Lord Jesus." Mary Magdalene, upon this, hastened back to the city, for all the tombs were on the outside the walls, *and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.*

In the mean time the other women remained on the spot. "And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout,³ behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and as they

¹ "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary." Matthew.—"Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome." Mark.—"Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women." Luke.—St. John mentions only Mary Magdalene, because she had been the person who brought the first report: but her words intimate that she had not been alone. "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him." When she *was* alone, afterwards, v. 13, she uses the *singular form*.

² How this had happened, we must collect from St. Matthew. "Behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it."

³ See Matthew, Mark, and Luke, except that according to St. Mark, "They saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment."

were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go quickly, and tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you."

"The women remembered his words, and went out quickly: for they trembled and were amazed:" in their alarm and astonishment they said nothing to any man, "on the spot or by the way: but returned from the sepulchre, and ran to bring the disciples word, and told all these things unto the eleven, and unto all the rest. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and "they believed them not."⁴

Peter and John, however, whom we have always seen to be, the one the most ardent and zealous, the other the most faithful of apostles, were too much interested in what had been told them, to be content without further examination. *Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.*⁵ John stooped down, and

⁴ St. Luke here observes, "it was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles." He does not specify that Mary Magdalene had arrived first, and brought her account separately.

⁵ St. Luke does not mention that Peter entered the tomb, or that John accompanied Peter. He leads us, however, to suppose

saw the linen clothes lying : Peter following him, went in : and they “ beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves,” and all things as the women had reported : he saw and believed that it was as Mary had said ; “ and departed, wondering at that which was come to pass.” They still thought of explaining the circumstances in some other way, and were not yet prepared to receive as certain the astonishing fact of the resurrection. We consider this as strange. The belief of the resurrection of the body has been made familiar to us. We should not have had the same just reason to believe it, if the apostles had believed without indisputable evidence and full examination.

10. *Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.*

11. *But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping :⁶ and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,*

12. *And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.*

13. *And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken*

what otherwise we might have doubted, that these two were with the rest when the women came, and that Mary Magdalene had not seen them separately. For after stating, *They believed them not* : he proceeds, *Then arose Peter*, and ran unto the sepulchre.

⁶ She had returned to it, we may suppose, following Peter and John.

away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

14. *And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.*

To prevent the too great a surprise, or sudden alarm which might have struck her, he revealed himself by degrees.

15. *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.*

Then in a voice which she had so long known, and so often heard with veneration,

16. *Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.*

17. *Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father: and to my God, and your God.*

18. *Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.*

Such was the gracious message with which he announced the truth which they were so slow to comprehend. He does not upbraid them for their disbelief of his own plain words: he does not

condemn them for deserting him in the hour of trial; they are still his *brethren*: his Father is their Father, his God their God.

And not theirs only, but the God and Father of all who “believe in him through their word.” Such is the mercy which he has wrought for his disciples. He has caused his Father to adopt them as his children, and his God to protect them with his almighty power. He hath put away the sins, which “made a separation between them and their God.”

Is it so with yourselves? Is the God and Father to whom Christ has ascended, your God and your Father, to whom you are reconciled, to whom you have access through the Son? Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is the blessing which you enjoy. He who made the worlds, is your gracious Father: he who governs all things, is your merciful God: he has entered into covenant with you; and is pledged, that in this life “all things shall work together for your eventual good;” pledged to raise you up to eternal life at the last day.

Strive to keep “the jewel of your hope” unbroken to the end. “Watch and pray,” and by his grace you shall keep it. For he who has bestowed it upon you is ascended to his Father and your Father, and to his God and your God.

LECTURE XCIV.

JESUS APPEARS TO THE APOSTLES AND
GIVES THEM HIS COMMISSION.

JOHN XX. 19—23.

19. *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

20. *And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.*

21. *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

For the same purpose and to the same end I commission you. In this sense, the apostles were sent into the world *as* the Son was sent into the world. In another sense Christ stood alone. The Father sent the Son, first to be “the propitiation for our sins:” to “give his life a ransom for many.” This office no man could share with him. And further, Christ was perfect and infallible; such as no descendant of Adam can be. But then he was also

sent into the world, to preach “the gospel of peace,” “the gospel of the kingdom:” “to seek and to save that which was lost.” For this purpose the Father had sent him. And for this purpose he now commissions the apostles, to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature:” that as many as believe in him whom God hath sent, may “not come into condemnation, but have eternal life.”

It was an arduous enterprize. “Unreasonable and wicked men” would oppose themselves: they were to “wrestle not against flesh and blood” alone, but against the powers of darkness, and the wiles of the devil.¹ How should they overcome this malice? How discern the spirits which were for them and the spirits which were against them? How distinguish the worldly and self-interested, from the sincere and earnest who “sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness?” They must be endued with power from on high: with power which men naturally have not, and with which other men have never since been endued: power which should enable them to distinguish between the hypocrite and the penitent, and to know the child of God from the child of Satan. This power should not be denied them.

22. *And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost;*

¹ See Eph. vi. 11, 12.

23. *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

Thus directed by the Holy Ghost, Peter could not be deceived by the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira: and said to the wife, whose husband had already suffered the penalty of his fraud, "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out."² By virtue of the same power, "Saul set his eyes on Elymas the sorcerer, and said, O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season."³ By virtue of the same power, he directed that a transgressor in the church of Corinth should be "delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh:" and afterwards declares, that "now in the person of Christ he forgives him."⁴

The power, then, of *remitting or retaining sins* was committed in a peculiar manner to the apostles, and with it, the discerning of spirits which such power required. But we must carefully note,

² Acts v. 1—11.

³ Acts xiii. 9—11.

⁴ 1 Cor. v. 5; 2 Cor. ii. 10.

that even as exercised by them, this absolution or condemnation did not extend beyond the present world. They did not put themselves in the place of God, “to kill or to make alive” in reference to eternity. They did not contradict the sentiment, “Who can forgive sins, but God alone?” Their Master “had power on earth to forgive sins,” and claimed it, and exercised it : but the Jews who accused him on this head, and were forward enough to find blame against the apostles, never saw reason to bring such an allegation against them.

The authority, then, to *remit sins* or to *retain sins*, was limited to the apostles, and to the present world. Why, then, do we say to the ministers of our church, “Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven : and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained ?”⁵

Because, though the power of forgiving or retaining sin in their own person is not transferred to them, the conditions are entrusted to them on which sin is forgiven or retained. They cannot say, as their Lord had said, “Thy sins are forgiven thee. Go in peace.” They cannot say, like the apostles, “Thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season.” They cannot say, “Those who have buried thy husband shall carry thee out.” Even the apostles used this power on rare occasions. Their ordinary course was to use such words, as every minister of Christ is bound to use. “Re-

⁵ Ordination service.

pent, and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “By him all that believe are justified from all things.”⁶

The ministers who follow their steps declare the same. They testify the forgiveness of sins past : testify that they are the messengers of the gospel of peace, which invites all men to salvation :⁷ and proclaim that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them : and hath committed unto them the word of reconciliation.”⁸ And though they speak with authority, as ambassadors of God, they do not pretend that authority is given them in their own persons to absolve the soul from guilt, or to retain it under condemnation. But in obedience to the message entrusted to them, they pronounce whose sins are remitted ; and at the same time they pronounce whose sins are retained. Thus, and thus only, do they *remit sin*, or *retain sin*. And their ministry is, by intent and purpose, as the apostle says, “a savour of life unto life towards them that believe ;” and by consequence, and only by consequence,⁹ “a savour of death unto death”¹ in them that perish.

⁶ Acts ii. 38 ; xvi. 31 ; xiii. 39.

⁷ Calvin in loco.

⁸ 2 Cor. v. 19.

⁹ “In that we are reconciled to God, this is proper to the gospel : and it is an accidental thing, that believers are adjudged to eternal death.” Calvin, ubi supra.

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 16.

Ministers, therefore, are to be esteemed and reckoned as “stewards of the mysteries of God.”² “Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful:” that he dare not to pronounce forgiveness, where God has not forgiven; or condemnation, where God has not condemned. The words of God are very severe upon this point, as delivered to the prophet Ezekiel.³ “Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! Because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, when there is no peace.—Will ye pollute me among my people, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live?—With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad: and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life.”

Warnings like these should instruct both the people and the minister. The minister, that he speak as one “who shall give account:” and the people, that they refer “to the law and to the testimony,” and “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.”⁴ He alone, who could *breathe upon* his apostles, saying *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*: he alone in his own person had power on earth to save or to condemn.

² 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.

³ xiii. passim.

⁴ 1 John iv. 1.

For thus he reveals himself: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death." ⁵

LECTURE XCV.

THE UNBELIEF OF THE APOSTLE THOMAS LEADS TO A DECLARATION OF THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE BELIEVERS IN CHRIST.

JOHN XX. 24—31.

24. *But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.*

25. *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*

26. *And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.*

⁵ Rev. i. 18.

27. *Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.*

28. *And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.*

29. *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

30. *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.*

31. *But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.*

A proof of Christ's resurrection, of his resurrection in the same body which had died, was here given to Thomas, which banished every doubt. But it is a proof which others can never see. And he was allowed to require it, and it was granted him, to confirm the faith and increase the comfort of future Christians. *Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.*

It was needful that the Lord should be seen in the form of man by those who were to bear witness concerning him. It was needful that some should be able to say, like St. John, "The Word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory." We saw his miracles, and we heard his discourses.

So, again, after his resurrection he was seen not

by the apostles only, but “by above five hundred brethren at once.”¹ They saw, and *because they saw, believed.*

But he could not possibly be seen by those who were hereafter to become his disciples, and have life through his name. These must believe in him “through their word:” that is, on the report of those who had lived with him in the flesh, and witnessed his death and his ascension.

Looking forward to these, the Lord declares to his incredulous apostle, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* Like those to whom St. Peter wrote, and of whom he speaks, after mentioning the name of Christ: “whom not having seen, ye love; and in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Our Lord has left to these, and such as these, the comfort of knowing that they were in his mind, and graciously thought of, from the moment when the salvation wrought by him was about to be published to the world. He pronounces them BLESSED. Let us consider why.

They are at peace with God. “Being justified by faith they have peace with God through Jesus Christ.” And without this there is no peace. The desire of it first led them to the Redeemer. The desire of it first brought them to apply to him, and completed in their own persons the cove-

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 5.

nant of their baptism. And this they possess and enjoy : it is not a blessing for which they are to wait till some future time ; of which they are to have no present sense or knowledge ; they are not to linger in hope that the favour of God, his acceptance of their persons, his forgiveness of their sins, will be made over to them at some distant day : but it is already theirs ; and their privilege is, in the language of the Liturgy, “ being cleansed from their sins, to serve God with a quiet mind.”

This is the foundation of their blessedness. They are blessed, also, because they are delivered from “ the dominion of sin,” delivered from this present evil world, “ and enabled through the Spirit working in them to subdue the lusts of the flesh.” They are blessed, also, because they have secured to themselves, as they pass through this weary wilderness, a shepherd full of kindness, full of care, and full of power. They have the confidence expressed by St. Paul, “ My God shall supply all your need.” They have the assurance which was granted to him, “ My grace is sufficient for thee.”

In all this there is as much of blessedness, as the present life is capable of receiving.

Still it is our present life : and it is life in a fallen world. The sinfulness which adheres to the heart, even after the power of sin is broken, still interrupts and disturbs its peace. And the many wants, the many afflictions which exist, and from

which the children of God are not exempted, often make us confess and feel, that here is not our hope: that the blessedness promised to the Christian is something which cannot be found below: that he must set his affections on things above, and look there, at God's right hand, for "the fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

And this is the real cause, why the Lord here so solemnly pronounces those blessed who believe: because theirs is the kingdom prepared of God for the righteous; because theirs are the good things which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." We grievously undervalue this: our spirits, tied and bound by this present world, are unable to think of it as it deserves. But our Lord knew, well and fully knew, the nature, and the reality, and the extent of that happiness. He had a complete acquaintance with the things laid up at God's right hand for them that love him: and therefore he says, *Blessed are they that have believed*, because they shall possess those joys. At the moment they may not feel themselves blessed. But he to whom the future is present; he to whom what shall be is as if it were, he sees beyond their trials, their labours, and their sorrows, and anticipates the end. He knew, for example, that his apostles should suffer all that makes this life grievous; imprisonment, the scourge, reproach, hunger, cold, and nakedness. Yet he said,

“Blessed are ye ; for great is your reward in heaven.” He knew that his followers would often groan heavily in spirit, being burthened with the sense of their inward corruptions and rebellious desires. Yet he said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” He knew that many of those whom God would hereafter give him, would languish in poverty, would be oppressed by sickness and by pain. Yet he said, “Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh.” The case may be compared to what took place at the death of the first martyr, Stephen. Those who stood by, and saw him stretched along the ground, bleeding, and bruised, and maimed, and gasping for breath, might pity him, as if brought to the lowest state of human wretchedness. But what was his real feeling and condition? “Behold,” he exclaims, “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.”² And so the Lord Jesus. He is well aware that grief and trial and tribulation are the lot of many of his own people. But he sees also the heavens opened, and the earth receding:—earth receding, with all its load of sin and misery ; and the heavens opening with all the glory which is to be revealed:—and therefore he says, *Blessed are they that have believed ;* for there shall be a performance of those things which were spoken of the Lord.

² Acts vii. 56.

These are the thoughts which may animate the faithful disciple of Christ under all the trials and difficulties of his earthly warfare. His Lord, who knew them all, has pronounced him *blessed*. And he is blessed. Blessed now in the favour and support of Almighty God: and—what is alone important in the sight of infinite wisdom—blessed for eternity.

One thing only remains: but it is all important. Have we believed? *Not having seen, have we believed?* Not having received the promises, but “having seen them afar off, and been persuaded of them.” Let our hearts reply, and our lives prove this: that the Spirit of God may “bear witness with our spirit,” that we are “sealed by him unto the day of redemption.”

LECTURE XCVI.

CHRIST APPEARS TO HIS APOSTLES, AND
MAKES A PARTICULAR ADDRESS TO
SIMON.

JOHN xxi. 1—17.

1. *After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself.*

2. *There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.*

3. *Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.*

4. *But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.*

5. *Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.*

6. *And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast, therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.*

7. *Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.*

8. *And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.*

9. *As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.*

10. *Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.*

11. *Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.*

12. *Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.*

13. *Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.*

14. *This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.*

The time was not yet come, when the apostles were to enter upon the work intended for them, For employment and for subsistence, they had recourse to their former avocation, till “the promise of the Father” was sent upon them, and they were “endued with power from on high.”¹

Whilst thus engaged, their Lord appeared to them for *the third time after that he was risen from the dead*. First he had been seen by them on the evening of his resurrection. Then after eight days had passed, he satisfied the doubts of his unbelieving disciple Thomas. And now he stands on the shore near which they were labouring: *but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus*.

His address is familiar and gracious. *Children, have ye any meat?* May not this remind us, that he is interested in the circumstances and wants of his disciples? May it not justify St. Paul’s assurance, “My God shall supply all your need;” “Be careful for nothing?”²

¹ Luke xxiv, 49.

² Phil. iv. 19, and 6.

At his command they cast their net once more : and the success was like that which had astonished Simon Peter three years before, and first displayed to him the power in which Jesus came.³

Here also was a lesson for them in their future vocation as “fishers of men.” They might toil long, and take nothing : yet in the end receive an ample recompense. It was a significant emblem of that company which shortly after gladly received the word of Peter, and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus : “and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”⁴

At once they recognize the author of their unexpected success, who had thus provided for their wants until the predetermined time, “the day of Pentecost, was fully come.” John, *that disciple whom Jesus loved, saith unto Peter, It is the Lord.*

15. *So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.*

16. *He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

17. *He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he*

³ Luke v. 1—11.

⁴ Acts ii. 41.

said unto him, *Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.*

The apostle who is thus pointedly addressed, had always shown a ready and forward zeal towards his Master. “Lord,” he had said, “I will lay down my life for thy sake.” “I am ready to go with thee both to prison and to death.” “Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.”⁵ Our Lord now intimates that his love and zeal will hereafter be put to the test, and have full scope for their exercise. *Simon, lovest thou me? Lovest thou me more than others? More than these thy companions?* Hitherto there has been no proof of this, except thy ready professions: for when “all the disciples forsook me and fled,” thou didst not remain at my side: yea, with an oath didst thou affirm, thou “knewest not the man.” If, however, thou lovest me, behold the way in which it may be shown. *Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep.*

It was the purpose of our Lord, in taking our nature, to gather a flock out of the wilderness of this world, and bring them to everlasting life. He foresees the time, when there should be such a flock: a flock of every age, and of various degrees of strength: young and old, learned and

⁵ ch. xiii. 37; Luke xxii. 33; Matt. xxvi. 33.

unlearned, weak in the faith and strong in the faith. And these he bequeaths to the care of his zealous follower : and after him, to all who shall be partakers of the same love. *Feed my lambs.* Fulfil the prophecy which went forth concerning me,—“ He shall gather the lambs into his bosom.” *Feed my sheep.* Let it not be said to thy reproach, “ My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill : yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.”⁶ Feed them with that word “ which giveth understanding unto the simple.” Lead them into “ green pastures, and bring them forth beside the waters of comfort.”⁷

Described in the language of poetry, to feed the flock of Christ appears to be a task full of gratification and interest. When we descend into real life, the face of the picture is changed. It is to instruct the ignorant, to direct the rude, to reclaim the wayward, to guide those who are unaccustomed to the yoke. It is to overcome the allurements of ease, and undertake laborious duty : it is to leave the abodes of comfort, and to visit the dwellings of poverty : it is to become acquainted with vice, and pain, and indigence, and sickness, and sorrow. What can impel to this? And what maintain it, as a regular course of action? Our Lord here

⁶ Ezek. xxxiv. 6.

⁷ Ps. xxiii. 2.

suggests the motive, the only motive. *Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my lambs. Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep.* Is it an irksome duty? Does it bring more reproach than credit? More toil than gratitude? Yet it is the will of him whom thou lovest, that his flock should be watched and provided for; reclaimed when wandering, and enlarged when failing. And he whose love constrains thee, even he “pleased not himself:” he set the example of that self-denial to which he invites his disciples: when, because “all were dead, he died for all;” and now expects “those who live,” who are raised to spiritual life through the atonement which he made, to “live no longer unto themselves, but unto him who died for them.”

This is the thought which animates the Christian, and repays his labour and self-denial. He, to whom he owes *himself*:—owes all he is, and all he hopes to be: he approves, nay, requires this return of love. It is acceptable service to him, when the purposes of his coming are furthered and promoted: when the young are fed with the “sincere milk of the word,” and nurtured in the fear of the Lord: when the spiritual need of all is supplied, according to their circumstances; when the careless are warned, the weak-hearted raised, the ignorant instructed, the faithful encouraged and consoled.

Let all then apply to themselves the inquiry which the Lord applied to Simon. Lovest thou the Redeemer?

All are not called to show their love as the apostle did, or as those are required to do who have succeeded to their ministry. But all are bound to examine their own hearts, according to the same principle; and to see that the habits of their life would justify them in answering with the apostle, *Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.*

LECTURE XCVII.

CHRIST DELIVERS A PROPHECY CONCERNING SIMON'S DEATH AND JOHN'S PROTRACTED LIFE.

JOHN xxi. 18—25.

In the farewell address to his apostle Simon, which we were lately reading, the Lord had given him a duty to discharge. He had required him to supply his flock with spiritual provision. *Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep.*

To the performance of a laborious duty, men are commonly excited by the promise or prospect of reward. The reward which Christ holds out to Peter, is that he shall die a martyr's death.

18. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.*

19. *This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.¹ And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*

The apostle was not dismayed at the prospect. He ventured all upon his confidence in his Master's power and faithfulness. He obeyed the command, *Follow me*. He followed the example which he had seen, and the precepts which he had heard. He followed Christ, in zeal towards God and affection towards man. And, at last, he made good his original promise, and followed him "to prison and to death," even as the Lord had showed him.² Thus he set his seal to his own testimony, that he knew what he was trusting, and what he was encouraging them to pursue, when he "made known unto them the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."³ And as he was not slow in obey-

¹ The writers of ecclesiastical history relate that Peter suffered death by crucifixion under the reign of Nero.

² 2 Pet. i. 14.

³ Ibid. 16.

ing the command, so neither will the promise fail :
 “ Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”⁴

20. *Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following ; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee ?*

21. *Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do ?*

22. *Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ? follow thou me.*

23. *Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die : yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die ; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee ?*

24. *This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things : and we know that his testimony is true.*

25. *And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.*

Here, as on other occasions, our Lord represses all needless and unprofitable inquiries. When “ one said unto him, Lord, are there few that shall be saved ? he said unto them, Strive to enter

⁴ Matt. xix. 28.

in at the strait gate.”⁵ Again, when “the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be?” he turns aside the question, and replies, “Take heed that no man deceive you.” “Watch; for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come.”⁶

No doubt, however, his words here seemed to intimate that the life of John should be prolonged to a distant period; to that period, which they who were “first called Christians” expected to be the end of the present dispensation. And it was so ordered. *The disciple whom Jesus loved* did tarry upon earth, till that first coming of the Lord, which fulfilled his prophetic declarations; *i. e.* till his kingdom was established “with power,”⁷ till the vineyard was taken from “those wicked husbandmen” who had made no return to their lord, and was “given to others.”⁸ He was one who lived to verify the assurance, that “this generation should not pass, till all be fulfilled.”⁹

Yet how prone are men to put an interpretation on the words of Scripture, which goes beyond their real meaning! *Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die.*

So careful should we be to examine into the justice of traditional opinions, and see that they stand

⁵ Luke xiii. 23.

⁶ Matt. xxiv. 3, and 42.

⁷ Mark ix. 1.

⁸ Luke xx. 16.

⁹ Matt. xxiv. 34.

upon a firm foundation. In every age there has been a disposition to receive religious notions and sentiments from the prevailing belief, rather than from the fountain-head of truth. Perhaps this early error is recorded to warn later ages against the danger of similar evils: and to show us, as it is here shown, the remedy. The remedy, the security, is to apply at once “to the law and to the testimony.” How is it written? *Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die: but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?* Our business is with what is plainly and authoritatively declared. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

The Evangelist concludes by saying that the providential care of God had watched over the records of the life and ministry of Jesus, and directed that nothing superfluous should be preserved, nothing important omitted. Had all *the things which Jesus did*, all the signs of power which he gave, all the prayers which he offered, all the discourses which he uttered, been handed down in writing, *the world itself could not contain the books that should be written*. Certainly the world could not receive them, to any profitable purpose. The simple would have been bewildered, and the learned overburthened. “But these

¹ Deut. xxix. 29.

are written," as he had said before, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing, ye might have life through his name."²

These are written, *that ye might believe*. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." This is the beginning; but who shall describe the end? That believing, *ye might have life through his name*. Might have that life here, which deserves to be called life; when the soul which actuates the man, is itself actuated by God, directed by his Spirit; and might have that life hereafter, which man must come to, before he can justly conceive or duly prize it; but which those to whom the most has been revealed of its nature, have been the most afraid of forfeiting, most eager to secure by the practice of their lives, or, if needful, by the constancy of their deaths.

And of that everlasting happiness it may form some share, to know those things which here cannot be known: those which the present world could not contain or receive: but which may be the grateful contemplation through eternity, of that "great multitude, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,"³ who have been delivered by them from this present evil world, and brought to "know the only true God," through "Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." The secrets of redemption, we are assured, are a wonder even

² ch. xx. 31.

³ Rev. vii. 9.

to beings who are not individually concerned in “the mystery of godliness.” “These things the angels desire to look into.”⁴ How astonishing will all *the things which Jesus did*, all that relates to that hidden mystery,⁵ appear to those who have been thus “brought from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God !”

Let every individual make it sure that such is their own case. Let us not be satisfied, till by self-inquiry, and reflection, and prayer, by comparing our lives and our thoughts with the word of God, we can render it plain to ourselves that we are amongst those who “believe in Jesus Christ, and have life through his name.”

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 12.

⁵ See Eph. iii. 5 and 9.

THE END.

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